

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CHANGING RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS: THE IMPACT OF
PENTECOSTAL
SPIRITUALITY ON THE METHODIST CHURCH
IN NYAMBENE SYNOD, KENYA

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Cambridge Theological Federation

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Declaration

I do hereby declare that this thesis submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any material that has been written and/or published by another person (except that which has been acknowledged). The project also does not contain any material that has been presented previously for an award of a degree or a diploma of a university or any other institution of learning.

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YEAR: 2020

Dedicated to

My extraordinary God given family, my dear husband Mutuma, you are the type I needed to uphold me as I pursued my dream – a God given gift to me. I thank you and honour you. Our children Kagwiria, Muriki, and Kimathi: you have no equal in what you have sacrificed for my success. Your love conquered the physical distance. I owe you my undying love and gratitude.

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The Changing Religious Affiliations: the Impact of Pentecostal Spirituality on the
Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, Kenya

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This research seeks to explore the interaction between the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) and the Neo-Pentecostal churches in Nyambene Synod, Kenya, and the influence of this interaction on the religious landscape. The research seeks to account for changes in religious affiliations currently affecting the Methodist Church where a substantial number of their members, particularly the youth, have moved to Pentecostal churches and movements in the region.

Over time, scholars have interrogated the growth of Pentecostalism across the globe and in the Kenyan urban centres. However, no research has been done on the changes that have resulted from the interplay between Methodism and Pentecostalism in the rural Nyambene Synod, nor into the Methodist Church's response. This thesis seeks to address this gap as I ask what factors affect religious affiliation in Nyambene Synod and the impact that changing affiliation has on the Methodist Church.

Through a qualitative empirical research, this study has identified three main factors that increasingly influence movements of Christians between churches: the contemporary consumer culture that emphasises personal choice, the understanding of ecclesial identity, and the relevance of the church to contemporary (Kenyan) society. Pentecostalism appears to fare better with all three factors, while the Methodist Church is left behind. My research challenges the MCK to reassess its offer within the contemporary religious marketplace, not by imitating Pentecostal churches, but by rediscovering its Wesleyan social holiness heritage to respond to the socio-religious issues felt by its congregants.

The significance of this study is that it provides an interpretative understanding of religious affiliation changes, based on qualitative analysis of the experiences of church members who have made those changes in Nyambene Synod, Kenya.

KEY WORDS

Religious, Affiliations, Methodist, Pentecostalism, Changes, Church, Movements, Youth

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

African Instituted Churches are also known as African Independent Churches. They were founded by Africans who broke away from mission churches in their quests for religious and political independence.

African Initiated Pentecostal Churches are the churches founded by those who left or were expelled from the mission churches after they claimed to experience the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Assessment is a Methodist Church term applied to a certain amount of money assigned a congregation by the circuit or a circuit by the Synod or a Synod by the Conference to contribute in support of the assigning office to run the administrative and pastoral work of that office

Charismatic Churches are historically younger Pentecostal oriented movements, many of which function within non-Pentecostal denominations. They are characterized by their emphasis on spiritual rebirth, healing, deliverance and exuberant worship.

Circuit refer to a number of congregations operating as a unit under a pastoral and administrative oversight of a minister referred to as a superintendent

Circuit Plan. The term plan is a Methodist Church booklet that gives a quarterly program of the events that would take place in churches and circuit. It also gives Sunday services for the quarter, Bible readings and preachers for every church each Sunday.

Classical Pentecostal Churches: churches with links to early American and European Pentecostal churches and which stress the importance of speaking in tongues or glossolalia, as evidence of baptism by the Holy Spirit.

Conference. The supreme governing body of the Methodist Church in Kenya constituted as provided for in the Standing Orders. It is the final authority within the MCK for the interpretation of the doctrinal standards of the Church. It is under the direction and leadership of the Presiding Bishop in consultation with the Standing Committee.

Connexion/Connexionalism refer to a Methodist Church system 'where each part is connected to every other in a mutually interdependent nature derived from the

participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself' (BMC, 1999, 4.6.1). The connexional principle spells the relatedness of all levels of governance in the Methodist Church although the local churches circuits, and synod exercise high degrees of autonomy

East Africa Revival Movement is a spiritual awakening of the first half of the twentieth century started in Rwanda in the 1930s, spread and became popular within the Mission Churches in the whole of East Africa. It emphasised conversion of individuals into 'saved' brethren and public confession of sins.

Mainline Churches refer to churches that were founded by missionaries; examples include the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Methodist Church in Kenya, the African Inland Church and the Lutheran churches. This definition is largely used in the African context.

Neo-Pentecostal Churches or Ministries refers to a stream of Pentecostal churches that have emerged since the 1980s but gained momentum in the 1990s to date. These churches emphasize experience of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts such as tongues, healing, deliverance, prophecy and the gospel of prosperity.

Pentecostalism is here defined as a worldwide 20th Century Christian movement that emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as a transformative experience brought about by the Holy Spirit, generally evidenced by speaking in tongues (glossolalia) and promotes other gifts of the spirit such as faith healing, prophecy and exorcism.

Pentecostal and **Pentecostalism** are used interchangeably to refer to a wide variety of movements scattered throughout the world that can be described as having family resemblances.

Presiding Bishop. The official head and Chief Pastor of the Methodist Church in Kenya.

Standing Committee is the executive committee of the Conference consisting of equal number of lay people and clergy mostly the top leaders of synods including Synod Bishops, treasurers, secretaries and group leaders. It is authorised to act on behalf of the Conference in adherence to the guidelines of the Standing Orders.

Standing Orders are the official guidelines of the Methodist church in Kenya containing laws, disciplines and procedures which are meant to assist in the

effective and orderly governance of the church. It is a blend of history, doctrine, policy, ordinances and recommendations that have been agreed upon by the Conference.

Traditional Churches refer to the mission-founded churches but used here in their Western context. In the Kenyan/African context, they are referred to as Mainline Churches.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AACC – All Africa Council of Churches

ACK – Anglican Church of Kenya

AFLEWO – Africa Let us Worship

AIC – African Inland Church

AICs – African Initiated/Independent Churches

AIPC – African Initiated Pentecostal Churches

ATR – African Traditional Religion

BMC – British Methodist Church

EARM – East Africa Revival Movement

MCK – Methodist Church in Kenya

NACOSTI – National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation

PCEA – Presbyterian Church of East Africa

CHAPTER ONE

1.0. General Introduction

Christianity was introduced to Kenya in the eighteenth and nineteenth century by missionaries from Europe and America (Parsitau 2014), who planted churches which are referred to as the mainline churches in this research, and are additionally referred to as traditional churches or mission churches. These include the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church in Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian church of East Africa (PCEA), The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), the African Inland Church (AIC), Baptist Church and Full Gospel Churches. These churches followed the missionaries' (European and North American) way of worship by using their liturgy, tunes, and they maintain the church structures and traditions left by missionaries. Kenyans who converted into these churches were expected to shun their culture and religion in favour of Christian faith and culture (Nthamburi 2000). This is one of the aspects that African Independent Churches (AICs) and Pentecostals sought to address (Pobee, 2017), as discussed in chapter two. They felt the need to remain Africans and still be Christians. Today, the Methodist Church, like most traditional churches in Kenya, is experiencing a movement of members, especially the young people, to the upcoming Pentecostal churches and movements.

This study explores the factors influencing changes in religious affiliations, and how they affect the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, Kenya. It involves investigating how Pentecostalism has interfaced with Methodism in Nyambene and helped to change religious reality in the Synod, particularly the Methodist Church practices and perceptions. The research is based on a context of increasing movement of young people from the traditional mission churches, into the increasingly popular Pentecostal churches and movements in the region. In addition, it is also affecting the Methodist Church clergy, where young, trained ministers have left the church and started their own Pentecostal-oriented ministries as noted in MCK Conference minutes, 2011 and 2012. The third experience is that the Methodist Church is notably bowing to the pressure to adapt some changes in an attempt to remain relevant and retain its members. This is supported by Parsitau:

‘...mainline churches are increasingly appropriating Pentecostal and charismatic spirituality, ethos, practices, styles and manners in a bid to survive its impact as well as curtail the exodus of the youth to newer Pentecostal and charismatic churches’(2011 p. 131).

The Methodist Church in Kenya started in 1862 at the coast of Kenya where the first European missionaries arrived and proceeded to Meru where Nyambene Synod is situated, in 1912 (Nthamburi, 2000). The Methodist Church has thirteen Synods with two of them in Uganda and Tanzania as mission Synods. Nyambene Synod is one of the five Synod in Meru County, occupying the north-eastern part of the county bordering pastoralist county of Isiolo, which is predominantly Muslim. While the Church has expanded its boundaries and increased in number, this development has been minimal in more than a hundred years of its existence in Kenya as recorded in the world Christian database (Johnson and Gina, 2015). The MCK shows a membership of about 300,000 representing 0.65% of 46 million Kenyans in 2015. Nyambene Synod reflects this slow growth as it merely has about 28000 members in a Synod that has about 552,375 people according to the Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2019. Nyambene Synod annual statistics show an irregular membership fluctuation between 27,419 and 28,903 in five years as seen in fig 1. Statistics and facts about religious groups are difficult to get and ascertain (Anderson, 2019), but these are useful to give a picture of the progress of the MCK. While various factors could contribute to this irregularity, including poor record keeping and changing of churches, the figures are an indicator of almost retardation of growth in the Methodist Church in the Synod. As the research findings in chapter four demonstrates, the Methodist Church has lost members to these young Pentecostal churches and ministries, particularly the youth, though at the same time it has gained others so the variation in yearly figures remain minimal.

YEAR	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
MEMBERS	28040	28317	27419	29111	28903

Fig 1. MCK Nyambene Synod Annual Membership Statistics

Source: Synod Statistics Record 2014-2018

As with other mainline churches, this movement to Pentecostalism has attracted attention and raised concern among Methodist church leaders in Kenya. Similarly, there is a growing concern among traditional churches throughout Africa about this trend, as noted by Counted who, in his recent research in Nigeria, claims that ‘youth migration to Pentecostalism is already ongoing and gradually attracting concern in traditional churches today’ (2012, p.1). In her article *Charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church in Ghana*, Acheson argues that the Pentecostal influence has led to the ‘Pentecostalization’ of mainline churches (2011). Pentecostal Christianity, as Anderson asserts, has spread across the globe in the last fifty years and is found in almost every country, affecting almost every denomination (2019).

The Methodist Church in Kenya, and specifically Nyambene Synod, is not an exception to this wave, and therefore I endeavour, through my research, to study this wave of change and its impact on Methodism in Nyambene Synod. While there are other areas of life that could be affected by the changes taking place, including traditional denominations’ church-life, and traditional social values, the concern of this study is the impact on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod. This chapter therefore deals with the general introduction to the research, including the research theoretical framework, background of the study, the motivation for the study, the research problem, significance and the scope. It further highlights the research objectives and questions and, finally, gives a summary of the thesis structure before ending with a conclusion.

1.1. Background of the study

The Methodist Church, like most traditional churches in Kenya, is experiencing a movement of members, especially the young people, to the Pentecostal churches and movements. This phenomenon started as early as 1912 in Kisumu, western Kenya, when the popular *Roho* (Spirit) movement started among the Anglican youth who claimed to be infilled by the Holy Spirit (Anderson, 2004, p.112). Either these youths left their churches on their own volition or they were expelled, having become unacceptable due to their outbursts and other spiritual manifestations. However, these newfound movements and churches took a low profile until 1970s

when Pentecostalism started gaining momentum in Kenya (Parsitau 2011). Since then Pentecostal churches and ministries have attracted members from mainline churches and experienced tremendous growth (Lindhardt 2015).

Secondly, Pentecostalism has been growing fast as demonstrated by the Kenyan Christian population statistics from 2015 that show that the growth of Pentecostal-oriented churches in Kenya has shot up, steadily overtaking the older traditional churches that started much earlier (Gitau, 2017). In 2015, 81% (37,275,000) of the Kenyan population of 46 million were Christians. The biggest single denomination was the Pentecostals with 30.7 % (14,153,000) and with the highest growth-rate of 5.6% between 1970 and 2015 (Gitau, 2017, p.107). Anglicans and Protestants grew at 5.2%, and 4.76%, respectively, in the same period. According to Pew Research Forum 2010, seven out of ten Protestants in Kenya are Pentecostals.

1.1.1. Pentecostalism

Pentecostal Christianity here refers to Christian practice that claims connection to the supernatural power of God in a way that triggers the worship of the same, emphasising transformative salvation, baptism and the experience of the Holy Spirit, and is expressed through manifestations of spiritual gifts (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, 2017; p. 315, Anderson, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). These gifts include prophecy, speaking in tongues, exorcism/deliverance, and faith-healing, among others. This kind of Christianity is normally associated with the Pentecostal churches and ministries that recognise and emphasise the gifts and experience of the Holy Spirit. However, there are also charismatic Christians within the traditional mission churches that recognise, believe and experience the Holy Spirit and express the spiritual gifts (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). Contemporary Pentecostalism has seen great inclusiveness where congregations that have spontaneous prayers, singing, dancing, lifting hands in the air, faith healing and others are also categorized as Pentecostal or charismatic (Robeck and Yong, 2014).

Modern African Pentecostalisms change frequently making it quite challenging to put any clear distinctions. Being like lifestyle movements, they often follow the people's life experiences and expectations (Kalu, 2008). Robeck (2014) who also

holds this view argues that Pentecostal definition almost depends on the scholar's perspective on the phenomenon. We find detailed discussions on these types in chapter two, but here I give brief definitions. The common categories include the Classical Pentecostal denominations, representing the strand that is believed to be the oldest, having begun around the beginning of the twentieth century with links to North America and early European Pentecostal movements (Parsitau and Mwaura, 2010, Pew Forum 2010). The second category is the Indigenous Pentecostal churches that have no or little connection with Western mission activities. They were founded by Africans as early as 1950s and 1960s, and are fully run by the founders with no or minimal external influence (Parsitau, 2014). Neo-Pentecostalism is the other type that is the broadest as it includes the rapidly growing Pentecostal/charismatic expressions in the world. This broad formation came to the scene in Kenya from 1970s through 1980s but started growing tremendously in the 1990s (Parsitau 2014). This strain of Pentecostalism is also the most flexible with many other forms and expressions sprouting out of it, including charismatics (Anderson, 2004, 2019). The Charismatics describe Christian churches and ministries that recognise and emphasise the gifts and experience of the Holy Spirit (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, 2017, p. 315; Anderson, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu; 2013). However, in most instances charismatic Christians would refer to those within the traditional mission churches who believe in and actively strive to promote the experiential presence of the Holy Spirit and expression of the spiritual gifts. This study uses Pentecostalism or Pentecostals in reference to Neo-Pentecostalism, which is the most recent, most visible and fastest growing in Nyambene Synod just as it is in other parts of Kenya (Parsitau, 2014). At the same time, we need to note here that Neo-Pentecostal churches are not homogenous since many of them are stand-alone churches that have been planted by the pastor, who also has sole responsibility over them. However, most of them emphasise the experience of the Holy Spirit and manifestation of spiritual gifts

Most scholars of African Christianity, among them Allan Anderson (2004, 2019), Damaris Parsitau (2011), Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (2013) and Paul Gifford (2009), acknowledge that Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of

Christianity in the world. This spiritual wave is cutting across most religious strata in contemporary society, from urban to rural areas (Anderson, 2019, Parsitau, 2011). Similarly, Pentecostal churches and charismatic movements are the fastest growing in Kenya and they have changed the religious and social landscape in the country (Parsitau, 2011). Parsitau further argues that ‘at present, Kenyan Pentecostalism represents the most powerful and visible evidence of religious renewal in the country’ (2011, p. 128). Its impact on the contemporary society and the traditional mission churches is undeniable although it is noted that the social changes affecting every sphere of life in the globe have contributed significantly to the religious changes as well. This is discussed further in chapters five and six.

1.1.2. The Methodist Church in Kenya

While Pentecostalism grows in numbers and expansion, the Methodist Church in Kenya has continued to experience movement of members to the Pentecostal churches, pressure for change and breaking of older religious norms where children automatically became members of their parents’ churches. It is common to find some Methodist Churches holding services of deliverance, healing as well as organizing prayer and fasting for their congregants. While this could positively signify a reawakening of some elements of the Wesleyan heritage and a challenge of the status quo of the Methodist Churches, it may present the possible challenge of compromising some of the fundamental inherited theological pillars of the Methodist Church, as this research has discovered. An increased use of instruments and forms of worship that connects with the people’s identity and context has influenced the Methodist Church worship in Nyambene synod. A similar view is shared by Acheson (2011) concerning the Catholic Church in Ghana. According to Acheson, the church reached a point where it allowed its long-held Western tradition to integrate with traditional Ghanaian worship styles and instruments, such as the traditional Ashanti drums, local languages and local tunes after the second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. We also find that some congregations in Nyambene Synod are growing increasingly intolerant of ministers who seem not to be as charismatic as they expect them to be, while traditional hymn singing is becoming less popular in favour of choruses that are sung in a blend of different local and

foreign languages (Parsitau and Mwaura, 2010). On the same subject, Okpong asserts that in Nigeria, 'it is almost impossible to imagine an authentic minister of God devoid of spiritual gifts' (Okpong, 2018, p.27) where manifestation of the same is seen as the normal Christian worship. Charismatic Christianity is gradually permeating the Methodist Church, and where this meets resistance the church risks losing its youth to the Pentecostal churches and movements. It is upon such a background that this empirical research is undertaken to explore these contemporary changes and how the Methodist Church has responded.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study uses a practical theology theoretical framework, focusing on how the movement of church members is related to the social-religious changes taking place in contemporary society and the influence of Pentecostalism. The research therefore explores the interaction between Methodism and Pentecostalism and how the Methodist Church has responded to the resulting changes in ecclesial affiliations in Nyambene Synod. It has incorporated my own reflexive account in recognition of the role my personality and experience play on the phenomenon of study both as a researcher and as an insider faith practitioner. Bennett et al. (2018) argue that, in addition to other factors that determine a research project's approach and methods, one's worldview (beliefs and experience of reality) takes a central place. Further, a constructive approach rather than the positivist or transformative approach is used. This is because a constructive approach assumes that people construct their own reality by making meaning of their experiences of life situations and events (Bennett et al., 2018). A positivist approach assumes that reality can be understood through experiments, observations and measurements using a quantitative approach while transformative emphasise on process of change (Bennett et al. 2018). Thus, it recommends the use of the kind of qualitative empirical research approach that has been adopted in this study. Literature review has been done in order to dialogue with other scholars and to set my research in the wider academic and theological context. Empirical research was done on the ground in Nyambene Synod among Christians who have experienced both the Methodist Church and Pentecostal Christianity (see 3.5). As a piece of practical theology, this study seeks to gain a

deeper understanding of lived Christian experience of my participants in the Nyambene Synod in order to guide and shape the ongoing thought and practice of the church.

1.3. Motivation of the Study

My motivation to do this research comes from my call to be a minister in the Methodist Church in Kenya. This has been influenced by my whole life and experience from early childhood, growing up in the church and society, education, pastoral ministry and leadership. My desire to understand faith and relate it to real life situations has motivated me into doing practical theological research, especially because my life and experience in the church has led me to ask critical questions that I could not answer by being a member or even a church minister. Bennett et al. are of the view that ‘there is no view from nowhere, no theology or research finding that does not have a human, with a context and perspective, behind or within it’ (2018, p.20). In this understanding, I argue that I am an integral part of the research process, not only in the way I infer meanings from participants, but also in my understanding based on my own background and worldview. Thus, the following narrative of engagement or reflexive account demonstrates my starting point and life journey that helps to locate myself in the research and enhance the readers’ understanding. It touches on such questions as: who I am? what are my concerns and passions? how did I get involved? and why is this research worth the effort? Reflexivity is understood and used in different ways but here it is used in reference to the process through which I seek to appropriately and self-consciously situate myself in relation to this research project (Bennett et al, 2018). My motivation for doing this research is influenced by areas of experience that I have categorised broadly as: social-religious context, pastoral and leadership experience and multid denominational experience. My personal desire to make a contribution to ongoing scholarship on Methodist engagement with Pentecostalism and socio-religious changes motivated my study. Doing empirical research on the ground explores how these interactions have affected the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, with which I have strong personal connection. Below I discuss my life experiences that influence this study.

1.3.1. Social-religious Experience

I was brought up in what I can call a mixed religion family where African traditional religion, Christianity and traditional cultural values were at play. As demonstrated in chapter two, African Traditional Religion and culture are intertwined such that one may not separate the two to speak of one independent of the other (Mbiti, 1969). My father was a strong Christian and later a leader of our local Methodist Church for many years, while my mother held onto both traditional cultural and religious beliefs and practices and Christianity, a characteristic that was common among many Kenyan Christians then, as discussed by Getui (2017) in her article, *Faith and Culture*. Mother attended church, and also supported the traditional cultural practices, such as circumcision of boys and girls (one of the cultural practices mission Christianity condemned and tried to abolish) and consulted traditional diviners who were believed to foretell the future and had a role similar to the biblical prophets. As I write this piece today, I interpret her action as a way of complementing what she could not get from the church and this has been confirmed from literature as one of the reasons AICs were founded (refer to chapter 2). All the same, she encouraged us to go to church and she taught us most of the hymns in the Methodist Hymn Book that she had learnt from the missionaries. Coupled with my father's strict Christian belief and discipline, this enabled me to grow in the church where I was shielded from many harmful cultural teachings and practices. I was however socialised like any other Meru girl, surrounded by a community of relatives and neighbours who were part of a shared social life. Community values, discipline and responsibilities were instilled in me through social interactions and informal learning from my parents, grandparents and my parents' peers who were considered and respected as parents (Nthamburi, 2002). My Christian foundation and experience can be traced from my formative years in Sunday school where I was introduced as a small child. At my tender age, I loved going to church and learnt to read the Bible in our mother tongue very early. I therefore come into this study with a background experience of the issue in investigation and as Bennet et al. (2018) contends this could influence the perception of the phenomena. However, it is becoming increasingly accepted in social research that a researcher's

experience is useful in interpreting the event both as an insider and as an outsider (Willig, 2008). I remained aware of my own value judgements so that I could avoid interpreting the participants' words to justify what I know (Hale et al., 2007).

When I joined secondary school, I joined the Christian Union movement where all Protestant students worshipped. This exposed me to a new teaching that I had not experienced in my local Methodist Church, that of being saved, and I accepted this spiritual transformation. In the 80s as I grew up in my village Methodist Church, I witnessed young members leaving our church to join those started that were Pentecostal in nature. The Methodist Church was then seen by some as not having the Holy Spirit and so the youth were going 'where the Spirit was'. This perception and behaviour is noted by Asamoah-Gyadu (2013) as exhibited by the young people in Ghana who claim mainline churches lack spiritual vigour and gifts. This accusation and continuous movement of the youth kept a low profile until the 90s when Pentecostal oriented churches started to increase tremendously. The Methodist Church indeed lacked the spiritual experience and fellowship of the saved that I had experienced in secondary school.

1.3.2. Church Leadership and Pastoral Experience

Leadership experience began when I was elected a youth secretary in my church and a class representative in the school CU. In the church, I continued to witness young people leaving the Methodist Church to join other churches that had arrived in the neighbourhood, I resisted their pressure to move with them and remained in the Methodist Church. I joined the MCK ministry in 1999 and served as circuit minister, a hospital chaplain and a superintendent minister before becoming a bishop in 2016. In 2006, after finishing my master of theology degree from Queens University, Belfast, UK, I was appointed a member of the Conference Standing Committee. This gave me an opportunity to be part of the top Methodist Church leadership and decision-making body, where I witnessed young trained Methodist ministers leave the church and start their own Pentecostal-style churches.

Between 2010 and 2013, I served as a synod secretary (the second in seniority from the bishop) in Nyambene Synod, where one of my responsibilities was to receive

and consolidate synod membership data. This position enabled me to take note of the number of members in the whole synod that had about 150 congregations. I realised that the membership fluctuated between approximately twenty nine thousand and thirty thousand members in the four years that I served (Nyambene Synod statistical returns, 2010-2013). While these figures were never fully accurate, they gave a reliable picture of a church with negligible growth and this, coupled with the movement of youth to Pentecostal churches, meant that the Methodist Church was experiencing challenges that raised concerns and questions that this research has sought to explore. In 2013, while addressing church leaders of MCK Meru region, which has five Synods out of the (then) eleven synods in the whole of the MCK by then the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya, the Reverend Joseph Ntombura revealed that the whole Methodist Church in Kenya had less than three hundred thousand members. While this was not a clear decline, as we did not have reliable figures to compare with, it indicated a stagnation or an extremely slow growth considering that MCK was celebrating one hundred years in the region. This was attributed to Methodist members moving to other churches.

The Methodist Church has existed in Kenya for 158 years since it was started by missionaries in 1862 (Nthamburi, 2000), and in Meru, where Nyambene Synod is situated, the church has existed for 108 years. It is 53 years since it got autonomy from the British Methodist Church in 1967. As an insider, I am of the view that it has not integrated itself with the community sufficiently to make a substantial impact partly because of its faithfulness to traditions and systems that originate outside Kenya. Secondly, it has been facing challenges since inception coming from the AICs, the EARM, and the latest growth of the Neo-Pentecostal churches. Its membership remains almost constant despite its dominance in the area and its young people keep leaving the church. While the Methodist Church and other mainline churches experienced limited growth all these years, the Pentecostal churches that are relatively new are outdoing them in terms of numbers and expansion.

It is a challenging and almost an impossible task to obtain the numbers of the Pentecostal adherents (Anderson, 2019) but from anecdote and observation of the

trends, we could note that these churches are attracting big numbers. They attract people from both the mission churches and those who have not been going to church. This is happening regardless of the small hired buildings where most of these churches initially begin, especially in the rural areas. Their popularity, especially among the youthful, increases and continues to grow tremendously. Indeed, these churches and ministries are seen as a threat to the Methodist Church and other mainline churches in the area, which could be an indication that the traditional mission churches have not yet addressed vital desires of their followers. In my ministry, I began to question whether this was indeed a reason for Methodist stagnation and Pentecostal growth, and this will be explored further through this research.

1.3.3. Multidenominational Experience

I am a practical theologian with a special interest in counselling and pastoral care. I served as a hospital chaplain in our Methodist hospital from 2002 to 2011, where I encountered people coming to seek health services from many different religious denominations within and without Nyambene Synod. Through my conversations with them, I came across various belief systems and practices, including those that did not believe in modern medical treatments. Others believed in prayer healing and exorcism while others believed in ‘blessed water’, which their pastor would pray for and relatives would bring for them to drink. Quite a large number of these sick people believed in and desired the minister to pray and lay his/her hands on them. They believed this would transfer divine healing power from the minister to them. This is a recognisable biblical practice and it translates faith to action in a way that they desired (see Turner, 1999 p.254). This is an attempt to integrate the gospel with culture, which helps the people to identify with it. Another group believed in the traditional process of going to the witchdoctors even while they claimed to be Christians. Most of these patients with alternative beliefs belonged to Pentecostal churches.

This prompted me to begin interrogating this practice, where people seemed comfortable to join the new churches that to me had little to offer in terms of the

foundational Christian doctrines and spiritual care that I thought they needed. Churches that emphasised doctrines, such as opening ones miracles and blessings through giving to the pastor or the church. As a church minister and a leader, I wondered whether the Methodist Church addressed itself to the plight of its members with a gospel that could liberate believers from the basic social challenges they face. A failure to address this, I reckoned, could expose them to falling prey to what I considered as misleading teachings. I saw the need for a church that is able to communicate to the people in their cultural context in a relevant and a practical way, a church that would touch not only the spiritual but also the physical, socio-economic and psychological needs of a person. In this church, Christian faith would not operate as an abstract concept but rather as a practical, liberating power to its believers. Most of those I encountered who were attracted to these alternative beliefs were below forty years, which raised questions about how MCK was engaging in the contemporary socio-cultural and religious environment to minister holistically to the young people who form the majority of church membership in Nyambene Synod.

1.3.4. My commitment to serve the church

My area of interest is to explore the continuous changes of ecclesial affiliations in relation to Pentecostal influence in Nyambene Synod and the effects this is having on the Methodist Church. This research is asking what factors influence the choices that people make concerning the churches they join. Why is the Methodist Church not a preferred church by many? The assumption I began with here was that the upsurge of Pentecostal Christianity in Nyambene caused the changes in religious affiliations being witnessed, and affected the older mission churches. This prompted my desire to do an empirical study that would bring an understanding of these changes in affiliations in Nyambene Synod based on the context. The multiplicity of denominations especially those affiliated to Pentecostal spirituality is creating a crowded religious environment and a challenge to the mainline churches. The issue of ecclesial identity is now a blurred area resulting in a perceived loss of purpose and focus for both adherents and leaders alike. There have been cases in the media and newspapers exposing blatant acts of moral, spiritual

and financial exploitation of Pentecostal adherents by their pastors. For example, a recent case was highlighted in The Daily Nation (25/12/19). In spite of this alleged exploitation, such churches continue to gain popularity and this raises a question as to what causes this attraction and loyalty. As I discovered from my work as a chaplain, most of those I talked to could not remember the names of their churches because it is a full sentence and they had little education, if any. Such names include: ‘powerful prophetic prayer and fasting ministries’, ‘Holy Ghost Revival ministries international’, among others.

My other interest for engaging in this research was to investigate the forces behind the tremendous growth and spread of the Pentecostal churches in Nyambene Synod. Why have those churches succeeded in integrating themselves with the society that they have penetrated with ease the areas where the Methodist Church has not succeeded for decades? I consider this growth worth focusing on, as it is claimed to have changed the religious landscape in Kenya, (Parsitau, 2011), and particularly explore how Christians in the MCK Nyambene Synod have experienced and appropriated the new expressions of Christianity and their response to the changes. It has been a key research milestone to hear from those involved why they prefer Pentecostal Christianity to traditional mission Christianity. Before undertaking this research, I am aware that assumptions have been made concerning the vigorous growth of Pentecostalism. For example, I (and many MCK leaders and clergy) have always assumed that motivational prosperity messages and spontaneous singing and speaking in tongues were the major reasons for the explosion and influence of Pentecostalism to the youthful worshippers, and we expected the wave to die out with time. It was even referred to as ‘*mwanki jwa ndaara*’ in the Meru language, which refers literally to the flames from dry banana leaves that take seconds to die out. This empirical research done at the grass roots produced data that represent the real position from participants, which goes beyond the motivational/prosperity messages and experience of the Holy Spirit and touches on the engagement of the Methodist Church with the social changes taking place.

The other question this research seeks to answer relates to the impact of the changing church affiliations on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, the

implications of the movements to the Methodist Church. Pentecostal spirituality, that emphasises a transformative salvation that is exercised through experience and the expression of spiritual gifts, is penetrating into the spiritual practices of most Christians, regardless of their denomination. Pentecostal spirituality has demonstrated its ability and power to influence change and is increasingly becoming the religious practice of choice for many Christians (Parsitau, 2011). Its adaptive nature and appeal to emotions makes it closer to the people.

1.4. Statement of the Problem

This study explores changes in religious movement that are taking place in Nyambene Synod and their effects on the Methodist Church. Nyambene Synod, where the study was conducted, has experienced changes in all spheres of life, including religion. Like other parts of the country, the religious environment in Nyambene now is quite different from what was prevalent about four decades ago. Gez and Droz (2017) attest to this and contend that tremendous transformation in the religious landscape has been experienced in the recent past. What was true in 1980s and what is now true in 2020, are worlds apart. One of the areas manifesting these changes is the multiplication of Pentecostal churches and movements in both the rural shopping centres and villages. This is a break from the earlier practice where these churches developed more in urban setting (Parsitau, 2011, 2014, Gifford, 2009). Unlike Methodist churches that strive to purchase land for their church buildings early on after starting, most Pentecostal churches hire buildings and use them as churches.

Secondly, the Methodist Church has experience slow growth and movement of its young people into the new Pentecostal oriented churches in the area. Additionally, the older membership of the Methodist churches that were strict on observing church procedures and structures have been replaced by a contemporary membership that is less sensitive to traditions, less liturgical, and more influenced by the contemporary modes of worship. This increased change of religious landscape and the emerging novel forms of Christian practices triggered this study, especially because it significantly affects the Methodist Church in Nyambene and the connexion.

1.5. Significance of the Study

Religions are witnessing changes along with other spheres of life as attested by Bonsu and Belk (2010) and the Kenyan religious landscape has been undergoing significant transformation in the recent decades (Gez, 2018, p.122). The changes that are also witnessed in Nyambene Synod are largely unexplored and this study brings insights on the interaction between the Methodist Church, Pentecostalism and other agents of change as experienced in the Synod and the novel expressions of Christianity resulting from the interweaving of these dynamisms. A qualitative empirical research carried out at the grass roots produced raw data on how the Nyambene community of faith understands and responds to changes. It contributes to the growing body of literature on religion and social change and how Christians are responding to change. Further, the study adds to the existing body of knowledge on changes in religious affiliations in relation to Pentecostalism and other agents of change as experienced in Nyambene synod. The study offers a challenge to MCK to relate its theology and daily practice while situating itself to remain a spiritual services provider in the changing social and spiritual landscape of Kenya. Thus, the study contributes both to academic literature and to church policy.

1.6. Scope of the Research

This study was done in Nyambene Synod, Meru County, Kenya. Nyambene Synod has in the recent past experienced church affiliation changes as young people leave the MCK to join the Pentecostal churches that are growing rapidly in the region. However, Neo-Pentecostalism arrived about three decades ago, later than most parts of the country because Nyambene has been largely unexposed to modernization and other technological developments. The Pentecostal presence only started to be felt around 2000 and is growing steadily. Nyambene Synod's location away from any urban centre and bordering the arid northern counties of Kenya, where infrastructure is limited, delayed its interaction with the wider world. It has however attracted immense interests with its growth and marketing of miraa, a stimulant crop that fetches substantial amounts of money for the local people. Thus, its economic and social status has improved and people from different tribes of Kenya have moved into the Synod to work or do business. The impact has been

rapid changes in socio-religious and economic atmosphere and this has seen the rise of new denominations alongside increased use of technology. Because of this late opening up, the Synod has a large number of its population lacking education, especially those above forty-five years, and the attachment to traditional cultural beliefs and practices is still significant.

Six participants were selected for the empirical element of this research, to represent the religious landscape I am seeking to interrogate: three worshipping in different Pentecostal churches¹ in the region and three who are worshipping in the Methodist Church. All the six have experienced both Pentecostal and Methodist churches' practices through being members or associating closely with both denominations for not less than four years. This means the changing affiliations in the Synod is a feature they are well aware of and participated in as is addressed more in chapter three (see 3.5). Research is situated within a practical theological framework, so it seeks to understand the interaction between the Methodist Church, Pentecostalism and the changes taking place in Nyambene Synod as they affect practices of faith in the contemporary social context. Through this research among participants who have experienced this movement, the synod was considered suited to generate useful information concerning the phenomena under investigation. Research interviews therefore facilitated an in-depth exploration of changes in religious affiliations in context and its effects on the Methodist Church in Kenya.

1.7. Research Objectives

The principal objective is

- i. To understand the factors that influence religious landscape as experienced in Nyambene Synod, and the impact these changes are having on the Methodist Church.

¹ Nyambene Synod is dotted with different brands of Pentecostal churches with most of them being stand-alone congregations. They are not homogenous but they all believe and encourage experience of the Holy Spirit and manifestations of spiritual gifts. This research studied individuals with both Pentecostal and Methodist experience without going through their churches because the interest was individual experiences and understanding. However, the focus was Neo-Pentecostal churches, which are the target of this study.

- ii. To explore the interaction between the Methodist Church and Pentecostalism, and how this has affected religious affiliations in Nyambene Synod.
- iii. To examine how the Methodist Church is responding to the changing religious landscape and exponential growth of Pentecostalism in the area covered by the Nyambene Synod.

1.7.1. Research Questions

The research sought to address the following questions:

- i. What are the factors that determine religious affiliations in Nyambene Synod?
- ii. What are the reasons for the explosive growth and spread of the Pentecostal churches in Nyambene Synod?
- iii. How has the changes in religious affiliations impacted on Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod

1.8. Thesis structure

This thesis is organized into six chapters with a conclusion forming the seventh chapter. Within the chapters, subheadings are used to break the chapter into short sections that help develop a clear conceptual flow and enhance readability in addition to making the work neat. Chapter One gives a general introduction of the thesis and a picture of what the study is all about. It consists of a short introduction followed by the background of the study, which highlights the churches that provide the focus for the study, the Methodist Church and the Pentecostal churches. The chapter then discusses the theoretical framework that guides the study, the motivation for the study, a statement of the problem, and an account of the knowledge-gap addressed and the significance of the research. Finally, it gives the scope of the study, the research objectives and questions before ending with a brief conclusion.

Chapter Two presents a literature review that addresses the first question of the research, looking at the changing religious landscape of Kenya. It focuses on the origin of Pentecostalism and its entry into the Kenyan religious space. Definitions and typologies of Pentecostalism are discussed in the chapter. The Kenyan religious

background and religious development is also reviewed, touching on African Traditional Religion, the introduction of Christianity, African Indigenous Churches, and the African Initiated Pentecostal churches. The chapter ends with a review of the characteristics of Pentecostalism and their interaction with the context, its growth and expansion and finally the conclusion.

Chapter Three deals with the research methodology that was used to achieve the research objectives. It describes the qualitative approach to social research and a design of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Under this design, the chapter highlights the area where the study was done, its target population, the method of sample selection, the methods of data collection and the instruments used. Then the research process is described followed by how data was analysed and, finally, the ethical considerations that have been taken into account.

Chapter Four gives a report of the findings of the research from data collected in the field research done in Nyambene Synod. It describes the participants' lived experience as Methodist and Pentecostal Christians, and this narrative is enhanced by appropriate explanatory and interpretative input from the researcher. Areas of interest to the participants are highlighted, with verbatim quotations from the interview scripts.

Chapter Five presents an interpretative discussion of the research findings reported in Chapter Four, in the light of the existing literature. This chapter addresses itself to the second question of the research. Three fundamental issues regarding the movement of youth from the MCK to the Pentecostal churches emerge and are discussed. The chapter thus discusses the personal reasons that instigate movement; both movement motivated by attraction to spiritual consumerism and movement caused by tension between different understandings of ecclesial identity. The chapter ends with a short conclusion.

Chapter Six is a continuation of the discussion of research findings from Chapter Four regarding the impact of changing religious affiliations on the Methodist Church in Nyambene. In response to question three of the research, the chapter presents two areas of theological practice that this thesis identifies as challenges for the Methodist Church to acknowledge and respond to. These are, first, the contemporary inclination to understanding Christianity from the viewpoint of a

religious marketplace and, second, the desire for an indigenization of Christianity to enable faith to relate to its context. A conclusion then closes this chapter.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the whole research where all the chapters are integrated to present a statement of the achieved results and recommendations.

1.9. Conclusion

This study followed a practical theological framework as it sought to explore the changes taking place in the life of believers, as they practice their faith within the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches in Nyambene Synod. Through the empirical research, literature review and my own reflexive process, the research has produced useful information for the church, the academy and society. The purpose of the research was to better understand changes that are taking place within the Methodist Church as it engages with the influence of Pentecostalism in Nyambene Synod and the social changes affecting the general population. Since this is an issue experienced practically by believers, an empirical study was conducted on the ground within the contemporary social context. By accessing the community of faith in their context in Nyambene Synod, this research enabled a deeper understanding of reality from the participants' point of view and generated new data that has not been studied before. It contributes to knowledge in addition to challenging the theoretical assumptions of both the wider literature and my own perceptions. It also generated theological reflections, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, concerning the practice of faith in the contemporary society that is constantly changing. Contemporary social changes mean that Christians appropriate Christianity differently from the past and there is therefore the need for the church to understand and respond appropriately to the way these changes are influencing models of church. The study provides a new perspective from the Nyambene Synod for looking at the practice of faith that would enable the Methodist Church in Kenya to continue serving its mission effectively in the contemporary society. Furthermore, the rediscovery of an African-Wesleyan theological understanding of social holiness would enable the church not only to mould a Christianity made in Kenya by Kenyans, but also to maintain its ecclesial identity and relevance as a contemporary voice of the Gospel to the society. It would also enable the church to draw resources from its heritage to respond to the

challenges of change rather than simply striving to be more Pentecostal in line with the influence of Pentecostalism (Chapters Five and Six). A literature review of the religious landscape in Kenya lays the foundation for the study of changes in ecclesial affiliation in Nyambene Synod, and to this, I now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

PENTECOSTALISM AND THE CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE IN NYAMBENE SYNOD

2.0. Introduction

In order to research the changes in religious affiliations in the Nyambene Synod and the impact it has on the Methodist Church, this study adopted a practical theology theoretical framework. A practical theology study entails a dialogue between belief in God and contemporary social realities (Bennet et al, 2018). It is a study of theology in practice as experienced by a community of believers, which can be explored by carrying out an empirical research on Christians living their faith in their own context. The choice of a practical theology theoretical framework enabled the study to focus on changes in social-religious behaviour since the approach believes that ‘religious theological practices, insights and truths are mediated through contemporary social and material realities’ - as shared by Bennett et al (2018, p.20). To enable the empirical research, this study first undertook a review of the literature on the subject. The literature provides a basis for understanding the present contextualised social beings who are shaped by their experience, community, Christian traditions and the Bible (Bennet et al. 2018).

Literature was reviewed on the Kenyan religious background and developments featuring African Traditional Religion, introduction of Christianity, African Independent Churches, the East Africa Revival Movement, and Pentecostalism in order to provide a foundational background upon which changes in church affiliations could be investigated. ‘Pentecostal’ is used here to refer to the churches and ministries that put an emphasis on the experience of the Holy Spirit that results in conversion or salvation and is manifested in different expressions of spiritual gifts, including (but not exclusively) spontaneous prayers, speaking in tongues, prophecy, miraculous acts like deliverance and healing (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, 2017).

This review of literature illuminates the interaction between the different forms and expressions of religion and the social context in Nyambene Synod and relates this

dialogue to the contemporary experience of the social and religious environment in the Synod. The research ultimately focuses on Neo-Pentecostalism, the strand that is growing fast in Nyambene Synod and influencing the traditional churches significantly.² In examining key characteristics of Pentecostalism that are seen to have contributed to its growth and expansion, we are able to explore how it engages with other players and its role in influencing or facilitating change particularly among the Methodists in Nyambene. In addition, literature dialogues with the empirical research in ways that reveal the contribution of Pentecostalism in influencing the social, religious and economic changes in Nyambene Synod. Pentecostalism has demonstrated its capacity for transformation and social change,, as Parsitau and Mwaura (2010) contend, a view that is held by Nyabwari and Kagema (2014). This is demonstrated by the way these churches have captured their space among other forms of Christianity that existed before their inception in the 1980s in Nyambene Synod. Pentecostal Christianity came into a context that was occupied by mission Christianity, and those earlier Pentecostal-oriented churches that emerged from the mission churches for varied reasons as discussed later in the chapter, as well as African Traditional Religion (ATR). This chapter is organised into three sections that address the key focus areas for the research.

The first section of the chapter examines the religious context or the background upon which Pentecostal Christianity flourishes in Nyambene. African culture and traditional religion forms the context for different denominations and religions that have come to Kenya including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Therefore, it is considered essential to explore the role of ATR in the progress of Christianity and of Pentecostalism in particular. While there are other factors that are important for the success of any religion that has come to Africa, its ability to relate with the African traditional religious and socio-cultural environment of the African people is especially important (Bowen, 2007). Subsequently, mission Christianity, African Initiated Churches and the East African Revival Movements have all engaged and significantly contributed to the general socio-religious changes in Nyambene, and

² Different categories of religious expressions and their interactions are discussed in 2.2.4 below

therefore there is a need to examine this interaction. To explore this, I dialogue with African Christianity and Pentecostal scholars among them Asamoah-Gyadu, Parsitau, Mugambi, Ross, Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, Ogbu Kalu, O'Donovan, Anderson, Gifford and Mbiti.

Secondly, we explore the roots and development of Pentecostal Christianity and consider different views held by scholars. This section identifies the different forms of Pentecostalism that are found in Kenya, their origin and development including classical Pentecostal churches, African Initiated Pentecostal churches, Neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics. As we endeavour to answer the research question about the changes in ecclesial affiliations in relation to Pentecostalism, we discuss how MCK has engaged with the different strands and the impact of the interaction. The emphasis is on the Neo-Pentecostals, which are the interest of this study.

Finally, the chapter explores those characteristics of Neo-Pentecostalism that contribute to its expansion and growth and that must be explored in relation to changes in Nyambene Synod. This is because, more than the other strands, these Neo-Pentecostal movements have penetrated rural areas such as Nyambene with immense effect, as noted by Parsitau and Mwaura (2010). The change in the religious landscape in Kenya has been attributed to the Neo-Pentecostal Christianity (Parsitau, 2011) and this research aims at understanding their growth and role on the changes affecting the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod. This broad category (of Neo-Pentecostalism) has many contemporary features and is the fastest growing, most influential and most controversial not only globally, as Anderson (2019) contends, but also in Nyambene Synod.³

The purpose of the chapter, therefore, is to provide a theoretical overview of Pentecostalism through its origin, its development in Kenya, its general features and its influence on the religious changes taking place in Nyambene Synod. This provides a basis to interrogate its contribution to religious affiliations and their impact on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, in connection with the findings of the empirical research. Literature further helps in understanding more

³ Neo-Pentecostal features are discussed in chapter 2.2.4.

the phenomena of study and relating the findings with the wider world of knowledge and theological practice.

2.1. The Kenyan Religious Background

This section gives a brief religious context looking at African traditional Religion (ATR), referred to by some scholars as African Religion (AR), mission Christianity, the African Initiated Churches (AICs) and the East African Revival Movement (EARM). This is crucial as it sets the study in its context and provides the narrative from which Pentecostal Christianity develops. ‘Traditional’, as used in ATR, also could be interchanged with ‘Indigenous’ to mean that which is aboriginal, and not old or outdated. To build a clear understanding of the proliferation of Pentecostal Christianity and even the shift of Christianity to the global south there is need to understand the context in which this form of Christianity sprouts and develops (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005, Anderson 2004). The Pentecostal movement, and the charismatic groups operating outside the traditional mission churches, are credited with the trend and the proliferation being witnessed in the global south, according to Kalu (2003). This form of Christianity sits on a foundation whose building blocks were placed by others, making it essential to examine those blocks through discussion of ATR, Mission Christianity and AICs.

2.1.1. African Traditional Religion

Kenyans, like other Africans across Africa, had a religion referred to as ATR long before introduction of Christianity (Nthamburi, 2000). The use of ‘African’ or ‘Africa’ in this study will approximate to ‘Kenyan’ in the sense that African Religion or culture is usually seen as having almost all elements in common, with minimal differences. The concept of God, divinities and/or spirits and the belief in ancestral veneration are similar, with differences in the festivals and rituals involved and the names given in different localities (Awolalu, 1976). Religion, as Van Rinsum (2003) and Getui (2017) contend, is an essential part of all human cultures and Kenyan is no exception. Therefore, religion and culture may not be discussed in isolation because there is substantial overlap between the two. Like most other African countries, Kenya is multicultural, but ATR permeates every part

of people's lives and lifestyles (Mbiti, 1969). Donovan (1995) has highlighted some of the African aspects of life that form an African worldview and he rightly claims that every people have a worldview. The understanding and interpretation of the world is determined by the community one grows up in, the people one associates with, including teachers and peer groups, family, the language spoken and beliefs moulded by this social interaction. Some of the characteristics of ATR that have influenced Christianity significantly are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first characteristic of ATR is communalism. One aspect of the valued heritage of Africans, and Kenyans in particular, is the community life that is considered part of the individual African (Nthamburi, 2000). One lives within a family, including extended family clan, community, friends and tribe. One only finds meaning and identity in being part of the others in this social network. Most of life, including worship, social activities, and social responsibilities, revolves around a community, a family or a clan. Mbiti, one of the earliest Kenyan Christian theologians, in explaining this interdependence, put it thus, 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' (1969, p.106). This means that an individual owes his/her existence to other people and, as Mbiti says, 'he does not and cannot exist alone except corporately' (1969, p.106). The social and communitarian aspects of the African people is key to the success of any religion in this context, not only in the past but also today. Forster (2018) discusses this concept in his work on African Christian Humanism in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, and stresses its importance in appropriating Christianity. Mission Christianity generally did not recognise this African concept of community and social network and it can be argued that this is why it produced Christians whose commitment is perceived to be only skin deep (Omenyo, 2014). This left a desire for a more fulfilling faith that would satisfy this communalism in a way that Mission Christianity did not provide but rather, on the contrary, privatised by introducing individualistic religion (Bowen, 2007). The empirical research will investigate whether this desire for community and social

network remains a strong factor in the changes in religious affiliation in Nyambene.⁴

The second aspect is that ATR believes in the existence of a God and of a host of spirits, both of which influence the physical world of human beings. The African God could usually answer prayers almost immediately and could either bless or curse, depending on what one had done (Awolalu, 1976; Mbiti, 1969). Thus, the spiritual and the physical are related in a way that cannot be separated in experience. The spirits, both good and evil, were the intermediaries. This belief compelled Africans to remain alert, and to seek a spiritual explanation and solution for every aspect of life (Nthamburi, 2000). Similarly, there was an active relationship between the living and the dead through ancestral spirits which also influenced the living.⁵ Ancestral veneration was practiced and there was constant communing with them, including asking them to intervene on behalf of the living. While this was a positive interaction, if an ancestor did not have a healthy relationship with the living when they both lived it was believed that they could curse the living and their spirit could instil punishment on the living (Mbiti, 1969).

The third characteristic of ATR is that it was immensely ritualistic. Rituals and festivals are significant to the African and, as noted above, their cultural and religious aspects are so intertwined that they may not be considered separately. Social and spiritual life are like two sides of one coin (Getui, 2017). Life is viewed holistically as a total sum of all that a person/community goes through in their entire life. Religion, therefore, could not apply to some aspects and not others. Rituals were used in celebrating rites of passage and other community activities, including the birth of a child, circumcision, death, planting, harvesting, and cleansing. They were characterised by singing, dancing, clapping, eating together, and worship; this kept the community alive. This support system was clearly known in the communal

⁴ Chapters Five and Six discuss this further and consider the way Pentecostalism developed to fill this gap.

⁵ Ancestral spirits in most times were harmless as they were either the parents or the grandparents of the living. In some communities children are given names of the departed so that they could have their spirit and continue living among the living. It was a great honour for the names of the dead parents or relatives to continue being remembered by their children. One of the reasons children are treasured is to perpetuate the family lineage.

life and stages of life where help, teachings and disciplines were implemented. This kept society balanced with systems in place to deal with all the issues that arose in normal life. This social cohesion was broken by Western religion and culture, which was introduced as ‘civilization’ and emphasised individualism at the expense of community life and worship (Nthamburi, 2000). The legacy of this cultural destruction is considered to play a role in the challenges facing both the church and the community, in terms of indiscipline and a lack of general life direction in the present young generation (Getui, 2017). A gap between the old and the young started to develop, partly due to an education that introduced not only a new way of life but also a new language (English) that the old could not understand. The communal systems and structures that provided a solid anchor on which the life of the community was based were interrupted with no appropriate replacement (Oduyoye, 2017; Getui, 2017). Their role of advising and maintaining discipline and order, for example, was left to the church and schools, which became quite ineffective, partly because the foreign Western structure of governance could not replace the old one effectively. Thus, the strain between ATR and Mission Christianity challenged the social setting of the Kenyan societies and triggered a desire for a more fulfilling religion that was eventually filled by the AICs.

2.1.2. Introduction of Christianity

Christianity was introduced in Kenya by missionaries from Europe and America in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Parsitau, 2014); they planted churches, referred to as the mainline churches, traditional churches or mission churches in this research.⁶ These churches followed the missionaries’ (European and North American) way of worship by using their liturgy and hymn tunes, and followed their behaviour and culture. Converts were expected to replace their indigenous culture and religion with Christianity. According to Pobee (2017), this is one aspect

⁶ These include: the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church in Kenya, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), the Africa Inland Church, the Baptist Church and Full Gospel Churches.

that African Initiated churches and Pentecostals sought to address. They felt the need to remain African as well as Christian.

Mission churches also relied on foreign leadership for a long time before any locals qualified as leaders. Additionally, they came at the advent of colonialism making it difficult to distinguish them from colonists. This being the first Christian tradition to come to Kenya, it played a significant role in the social, political and economic development of the country, as Gifford argues (2009): the mission churches brought benefit to education and health sectors as well as national infrastructure. Thus, mission Christianity has had a significant influence in Nyambene, not only in relation to ATR, but also the economic and social setting of the people.

2.1.3. Mission Christianity and ATR

Missionaries found Kenyans already as natural adherents of African Traditional Religion, which was embedded in their life and culture. Christianity effected tremendous change to this since it came dressed in Western culture. Christian Western culture started replacing the African culture as the missionaries laboured hard to Christianise and ‘civilize’ the African people. Missionaries often did not make sufficient effort to understand the culture of the people but simply condemned it, so that if one converted to Christianity, one had to abandon one’s customs and appropriate a European way of life (Getui, 2017). In the process, African converts were uprooted from what they knew; as Christianity continued to spread, together with colonization, a cultural vacuum was created which could not be completely filled by Western faith practices (Nthamburi, 2000). In Nyambene, for example, burial rites continue to challenge Christians even today because traditional beliefs and practices usually feature in burials. According to the cultural beliefs of Nyambene people, the head of the corpse is supposed to face the direction of Nyambene hills, which held a shrine for worship of the God *Kinikiiru*⁷ and for the

⁷ *Kinikiiru* is the name given to God by the Igembe people of Meru County. The people worshiped and sacrificed on the Nyambene ridges, which are an extension of Mount Kenya. There were priests that came from a specific family lineage that was allowed to give a ram for the sacrifice and produce a priest. Prophets were also active in predicting the future and, where needed, warning the people and advising on measures to take. Sacrifices and special community prayers were offered when the community needed the intervention of God in specific issues like famine and

offering of sacrifices. Older people are often ready to remind the pastor of this, regardless of whether they are Christians or not. When missionaries came, they condemned this practice and, as Nthamburi argues, since they never gave an alternative, locals tend always to revert to the old beliefs and practices. Missionaries introduced discontinuity rather than selecting and integrating ATR practices that did not contravene Biblical teachings (Nthamburi, 2000). The Methodist Church continues to struggle with some of this; decisions about such traditional practices are often overlooked by ecclesial leadership and are left to the discretion of individual ministers.

While the introduction of European culture and religion did significant damage to indigenous customs, some of the primal African cultural and religious beliefs and practices remained resilient, continuing to influence Christians and Muslims alike who have converted from ATR (Nthamburi, 2000; Sobania, 2003; Oduyoye, 2017). In her article 'Faith and Culture', Getui describes a scenario from among the Kikuyu of central Kenya in which a family was Christian and baptised but found it challenging to uphold Christian teachings (Getui, 2017). This is an indication that conversion to Christianity was not as thoroughgoing as the missionaries intended, with many converts retaining strong tribal and cultural values in their hearts and minds. This is witnessed even today, especially when Christians are faced with stressful and difficult situations in life, such as death, barrenness, sickness, clashes or war and other calamities that threaten life. While mission Christianity addressed many human conditions and gave hope, it remained insufficient in many people's experience. It is important to note here that Pentecostal Christianity typically neither condemns African customary practices outright, nor acknowledges them openly. Indeed, many Pentecostals do not see traditional practices as inherently problematic, even while they seek supernatural power to break the bonds of witchcraft and generational curses, through prayer and exorcism (Gifford 2009).

other calamities, or when a family member had committed a crime and people feared retribution that would affect the rest of the family clan and the whole community. The God of the Igembe people lived in the sky but had temporary abode on mountains where he rested when he visited earth to bring blessings or punishments. He could, however, hear and influence life from the sky and the spirits were the intermediaries.

Mission churches on the contrary put members on discipline⁸ when they are found to practice or favour these so-called outdated practises (Nthamburi, 2000). We note the different response towards traditional practices from the Methodist Church and the Pentecostal churches, and this is reflected in the empirical research, with participants suggesting that Pentecostals are in touch with ‘reality’ unlike the MCK (see chapter 5 and 6).

According to Donovan (1995), in dismissing traditional values, the Mission churches failed in relating the teachings of the Bible to the needs of believers in their context, especially given that Africans do not distinguish religion from their daily life encounters. If Christianity were to effectively replace ATR, it needed not to change and condemn their way of life (culture) but rather to provide a personal and communal experience of God that made sense within African culture. Mission Christianity failed to do this and converts often perceived the Christian God as an abstract and distant deity – a God who lives in heaven and awaits Christians to join him when they die. Unlike the God of ATR, who was encountered and appeased in daily life, the here and now life was not a concern of this Christian God (Kuipers 2011). Omenyo puts it thus:

...western mission Christianity lifted up abstract prayers to an unseen God that yielded no visible results, left diseases and afflictions uncured, and did little to allay the widespread fear of unseen malevolent forces and ‘witchcraft’ (2014, p.135).

The mistake missionaries made was to treat Christianity in Africa as a new beginning instead of a continuation of what was already there, and therefore as an agent to reform and improve the culture, rather than replace it (Getui, 2017). Consequently, the MCK, which is one of the mission churches, did not succeed in integrating Christian faith with the indigenous worldview so that it could respond to the existential challenges facing its members (Nthamburi, 2000). On the other hand, Pentecostalism, though not condoning all cultural practices and beliefs, does

⁸ Inherited from the white missionaries is the practice of putting errant members on discipline where they are denied participation in Holy Communion for a specified period. They also lose any leadership position they had and remain under pastoral care and observation. Then they must go through training to be reinstated into full membership of the church. This is meant to instil discipline in the members.

acknowledge the existence of supernatural powers and the traditional worldview that threatens its members, and it offers a response (Lindhardt, 2015; Meyer, 2004).

2.1.4. Mission Christianity and African Independent Churches (AICs)

As discussed above, missionaries achieved significant success in spreading Christianity to Africa, as acknowledged by many scholars of African Christianity. However, they laboured hard to produce not only Christians but also ‘Europeans’ out of the African converts (Nthamburi, 2000). Abolishing traditional cultural and religious beliefs and practices created an identity gap that African Christians continue to struggle with in the present day. Gatu (2006) argues that this gap raised the question whether one could be a Christian and yet remain African. We have noted above three major characteristics of ATR that are embedded in culture and which dictate the life of an African. These are the communal aspect of their social life and religious beliefs, the ritualistic nature of life, and their belief in a supreme God and a host of spirits that influence their daily life. These key features of ATR contributed to the identity of the African so that without them a vacuum was created. Their traditional identity was put at risk, and this resulted in the birth and development of the African Indigenous/Independent Churches (AICs) that sought to recover their lost identity by being African Christians (Omenyo, 2014). Consequently, the religious landscape continued to change as several expressions of Christianity entered the field and responded uniquely to the religious and social complexities of their time.

While these churches wanted to incorporate some Christian aspects that they felt were missing in the mission churches (such as prophecy, experience of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts), they also aimed at fighting for independence from colonial government (Pew Forum, 2010). Africans themselves started these African Independent/Initiated/Indigenous Churches (AICs), independent of any mission influence and leadership. They resulted from the African Christians’ friction with the missionaries, as noted by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005), Parsitau and Mwaura (2010). They either broke away from the mission churches or started separately on their own at the beginning of the twentieth century (Parsitau 2014). They were an expression of the African response to Christianity (Kalu 2008, Asamoah-Gyadu

2017) as they lived and understood it. Parsitau (2014) argues that they responded to the existential needs of the community. These churches arose primarily not to reject Western Christianity, but to complement it by filling a gap they felt had been created. They were, as Pobee puts it, ‘authentic indigenous responses to the gospel and a quest for African havens of belonging and places to feel at home’ (2017, p.348; Getui 2017 delete?). These churches include: the African Independent Church, Christian Brotherhood Church, African Church of the Holy Spirit, Church of Africa Sinai Mission, Africa Israel Nineveh Church, National Akorino Church of the New Testament and African Holy Zionist Church. When they began, they attracted large numbers from the mission churches who were either disgruntled or had been dismissed from the church for their different opinions. However, these churches have since lost their vigour and popularity, as Getui (2017) notes, despite believing in the experience of the Holy Spirit and manifestation of spiritual gifts. Given that experience of the Holy Spirit is one of the factors advanced by scholars as contributing to growth of Pentecostalism and the attraction of young people from traditional churches, this raises a question, beyond the scope of this research to, why the AICs have lost their appeal.

2.1.5. Mission Churches and EARM

The East Africa Revival Movement started in Rwanda in the 1930s (Kuhn, 2008), and spread and became popular within the mission churches in the whole of East Africa. Its purpose was to revitalise a church that had become cold due to the challenges of unmet expectations (Ward and Wood, 2010). The Anglican Church in Rwanda, from which this revival started, was accused of compromising with materialism and modernism at the expense of repentance and salvation. It was perceived that the Church had lost its evangelical zeal and this triggered a quest for renewal that quickly spread to Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania affecting mostly the Presbyterian, Anglican and Methodist Churches (Ward and Wood, 2010). Christians had started reverting to traditional beliefs, salvation was not being preached and a wave of religious lethargy engulfed the mission churches. This revival movement swept strongly across the mission churches, putting an emphasis on the conversion of individuals into ‘saved’ believers and on the public confession

of sins. This spiritual awakening of the first half of the twentieth century, however, did not mature into the vibrant Pentecostalism we have today in Kenya. Their renewing influence, as Getui (2017) contends, faded away with time. Nevertheless, the revival disturbed the formal and compromised system of the mission churches and prepared the ground for an even more vibrant movement that was to be witnessed later in Pentecostal Christianity (Omenyo, 2014).

The discussion above clearly indicates that the religious environment in Kenya witnessed continuous revivals that sought to change the version of Christianity brought by the mission churches. These early revival movements have since lost momentum, even though they still exist with minimal influence, having given way to the vibrant Pentecostal movement that arrived in the late twentieth century. Whether this trend will replicate itself with Pentecostalism can only be speculated from what has been observed with the past revival movements. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that mission churches played a significant role in introducing and establishing Christian culture in Kenya. The fact that Kenya today is predominantly Christian is the work of the missionaries and the mission churches that continued to evangelize after the missionaries had gone. Demographic statistics show the strong growth of Christianity in Kenya from 1970 to 2015, indicating that in 2015, 81% (37,275,000) of the total Kenyan population of 46 million identified as Christians (Gitau, 2017, p.107). Despite this, we can argue that the Methodist Church, like other mission churches, has faced challenges since its inception, arising from the indigenous African traditional religion, the AICs and the East African Revival Movement, each of which endeavoured to promote elements that were felt to be missing in the mission churches. This indicates that mission churches in general overlooked vital components of what African Christians desired to have, some of which, as we will now see, the Pentecostal movement attempted to provide. An atmosphere of spiritual disillusionment already existed before Pentecostalism entered the field. After portraying this background of the Kenyan Christianity, we now turn to explore Pentecostalism and how it interacted with this religious field, as presented by the literature.

2.2.0. Kenyan Pentecostalism: Origin and Development

Pentecostal Christianity has been growing explosively in Africa, including in Kenya in the last four decades. It is, however, a difficult task to get figures and facts for this growth, not only in Kenya, but also worldwide (Anderson, 2019). However, according to Anderson, estimates clearly indicate a remarkable worldwide growth estimated to be from 63 million in 1970 to 683 million in 2018. In Nyambene Synod of Meru County, Pentecostal vibrancy and visibility started to be witnessed about three decades ago and has increased tremendously. However, its impact in contemporary society and on the Methodist Church in the Synod is little known. Most African Christianity scholars, including Allan Anderson, Damaris Parsitau, Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu and Paul Gifford, acknowledge that Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world. We are therefore witnessing the birth of a new Christian culture nurtured by Pentecostal spirituality. In the Nyambene Synod, this is evidenced by the development of a hybrid form of spirituality, that is neither purely mission Christianity, ATR or independent Pentecostal, but rather a product of all three as they interact with the societal values and contemporary social changes.

Since Pentecostalism is cutting across most religious strata in contemporary society and, as Anderson (2019) contends, impacting every denomination in the world, it is worthy of scholars' attention. Similarly, Pentecostal churches and charismatic movements are the fastest growing Christian groups in Kenya and have managed to shake longstanding religious traditions as well as the social atmosphere in the country – a view supported by Parsitau (2011). Further, it is argued that 'at present, Kenyan Pentecostalism represents the most powerful and visible evidence of religious renewal in the country' (Parsitau, 2011, p.128). General Christian practices and beliefs among Kenyan churches are being reshaped by this renewal, both consciously and unconsciously.

2.2.1. Origin of Kenyan Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism, as an early twentieth century Christian experiential movement, was attributed to North America in terms of its origin, influence and popularity (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013). Other scholars, including Robeck and Yong, (2014),

Miller and Yamamori, (2007), and Anderson (2004), also acknowledge this North American origin. The Azusa Street revival of 1906, led by William J. Seymour, was the best-known source before scholars began to identify other antecedents, especially those outside America and Europe. Anderson (2004) argues that Pentecostal outbursts were experienced in many other pockets around the world in the nineteenth century and that these prepared the ground for the twentieth century Pentecostal movement. These revivals with charismatic characteristics were found in Asia, Africa and Latin America, with no connection at all with the North American movement or with one another. In Africa, charismatic movements were fuelled by the African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) which were reacting to western mission Christianity (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, 2017). AICs insisted on manifestations of the Holy Spirit which appeared to be absent in mission churches. Thus, although African Pentecostalism is often linked to the Azusa Street origin, it is becoming clear that Pentecostalism has various origins, from different locations and with different level of influence. Still, Gifford (2009) claims that African Pentecostalism is an American formation and has been greatly influenced by American Pentecostal pastors. He further argues that the prevalence of the prosperity gospel originated from American Pentecostalism. While this could be true concerning the older stream of Pentecostalism, commonly known as classical Pentecostalism, it is less likely to connect later streams, such as Neo-Pentecostalism and charismatics with the North American origin. Other scholars including Omenyo (2014), Anderson (2004), Asamoah-Gyadu (2013), Parsitau (2014), and Kalu (2008) suggest that while the Azusa Street revival could have some influence on African Pentecostalism, an African influence is largely responsible. I am of the view that contemporary Pentecostalism in Kenya consists largely of churches and ministries that have been started by Africans themselves (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). Christianity has undergone stages of development in Kenya and what we see today is quite different from the Christianity of the early twentieth century.

I briefly discuss below the different types of Pentecostalisms found in Kenya. These include classical Pentecostals, Indigenous Pentecostals, neo-Pentecostals and Charismatics. These are broad categories and may appear under different names

determined by the perspective taken by different scholars. Neo-Pentecostalism is the most recent, the broadest, and the fastest in growth and expansion. Charismatics have also attracted varied terminologies although in some cases they are put together with neo-Pentecostals. Here the charismatics are considered independently because of the role they play within the traditional mission churches.

2.2.2. Classical/Mission Pentecostal Churches

Classical Pentecostalism is a term used to describe the earliest Pentecostal movement that arrived in Kenya in the early twentieth century from North America and Europe (Parsitau, 2004). There are others that began through local initiatives by Africans themselves in the early twentieth century (Omenyo, 2014), and some scholars classify both the African-initiated Pentecostals and the American/European Pentecostals as classical. This study, however, considers only the Western-derived Pentecostal churches in Kenya as classical and discusses their development and impact independently. According to Anderson (2004), the first Pentecostal missionary arrived in Kenya in 1912 from Finland and opened their first school and church in 1918 at Nyangori in western Kenya. This did not make much impact, partly because it drew hostility from both the older mission churches and the African initiated churches (AICs) that were already resisting white missionaries. Africans could not distinguish between white colonialists and missionaries and they were therefore not eager to accommodate Pentecostal churches that were western mission-derived (Lindhardt, 2015). Indeed, this movement operated at a low level with very little notable influence in the first half of the twentieth century. Such classical Pentecostal churches were small in number and relatively unsuccessful, possibly due to a cultural insensitivity similar to their traditional mission counterparts. Their patronizing and racist attitude towards the locals also played a significant role, as Lindhardt (2015), for example, notes. This category of Pentecostal church is not found in Nyambene so they have not contributed to the current changes in the Synod, although they are part of the larger story of religious development in Kenya.

Classical Pentecostals hold the basic beliefs and practices of Spirit-led Christian movements, with an emphasis on spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, faith healing, exorcism, prophecy and visions. Their churches became institutionalized with time and less vibrant before the wind of change started to affecting them in the late twentieth century. Churches in this category include the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa, Pentecostal Assemblies of God, and the Full Gospel Churches of Kenya. These churches cannot be credited with the success of current African Pentecostalism (Kalu 2008), and even at the time of their arrival, other Kenyan-initiated movements were more successful. On the contrary, they benefited from the Kenyan-initiated Pentecostalism which started just about the same time as them. *Dini ya Roho* (religion of the Holy Spirit) among the *Abaluyia* tribe of western Kenya broke out in the Friends (Quaker) church in 1927, and got expelled from the church in 1929 (Anderson, 2004). It is imperative to note that the older mission Pentecostal churches do not play key roles in shaping contemporary Pentecostal spirituality in Kenya. Western influence, however, can still be traced within contemporary Kenyan Pentecostalism (Parsitau, 2014), such as the influence of modern media. We could therefore argue that mission Pentecostalism's impact on the current Christian landscape is noticeable but marginal. They have been growing at a much slower pace compared to the indigenous or African-initiated Pentecostal churches to which now we turn.

2.2.3. African-Initiated Pentecostal Churches

Pentecostal-oriented churches that are of African descent are referred to as either African-Initiated, or African Indigenous Pentecostal churches by different scholars. These terms refer to the kind of churches that are a result of the baptism by the Holy Spirit as noted by Asamoah-Gyadu (2005), who describes manifestations such as the exercising of spiritual gifts including healing, deliverance, speaking in tongues, prophetic dreams and visions. These groups tend to develop spontaneously and have no (or at least claim to have no) connection with missionaries and churches of Western origin. Earlier, before the growth of contemporary Pentecostalism – which started in 1970s but gained momentum in the 1990s (Parsitau, 2014) – there had been experiences of charismatic outbursts within the mission churches. In Kenya,

these were witnessed as early as 1920s (Anderson, 2004). However, similar manifestations are claimed to have occurred before the twentieth century in Africa, England, Finland, Russia, India and Latin America (Miller and Yamamori, 2007; Anderson, 2004). Mainline church members who experienced this movement of the Holy Spirit could not be contained within the church, so either they were expelled or they left on their own accord (Anderson, 2004). Some of these early African Pentecostal churches include the African Church of the Holy Spirit, the African Israel Church Nineveh, and The Church of God. Like the classical Pentecostals, these churches did not achieve much social visibility but they played a significant role in preparing the ground, together with the AICs, for the coming of much stronger Pentecostal movements that followed in the 1970s (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin 2017).

These churches should not be confused with the African-Initiated/Independent Churches (AICs), which (as discussed above) also broke from the mission churches. AICs were planned schisms and rebellions that were carried out in response to the mission's colonial dominance, discrimination and condemnation of African cultural and religious practices in totality (Pew Research, 2010). On the other hand, the African-Initiated Pentecostal churches were responses to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, often spontaneous and without the prior intention of starting new churches. According to Kalu (2008), this transforming spirituality, brought about by experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit, put the transformed Christian in conflict with older expressions, in this case the older mission churches, which did not display such spiritual manifestations. The African-Initiated Pentecostal wave of revival remained visible for almost half of the early twentieth century before its popularity waned (Gitau, 2017). The East Africa Revival Movement was also witnessed around this time originating from Rwanda in 1930 and quickly spreading to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (Kuhn, 2008). This, however, did not culminate in new churches but sought to revitalize the mission church from within.

During this period, therefore, Christianity in Kenya witnessed a series of Pentecostal revivals from the African-Initiated Pentecostal Churches, East Africa Revival Movement and African Independent Churches. These Pentecostal-oriented

revival waves affected most mission churches with some having greater impact than others, especially when some led to schisms. However, this spiritual awakening during the first half of the twentieth century did not mature seamlessly into the vibrant Pentecostalism we have today in Kenya as their renewing influence faded with time (Gitau, 2017). The revivals nevertheless provided the first force of change as they challenged mission churches, and unconsciously prepared ground for an even more vibrant Pentecostal encounter that was witnessed later (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, 2017). The AICs, which placed emphasis on the Holy Spirit and various 'Holy Spirit' movements that started around the First World War (1914-1918), have been credited with shaping all forms of Pentecostal Christianity in the East African region (Anderson, 2008). These movements, as Anderson contends, operated outside Western mission and colonial administration and were opposed to it. Meanwhile, mission churches continued with their mission style of running the church, long after missionaries had left Kenya (Nthamburi, 2000). They did not allow for the experience and manifestation of spiritual gifts, and this made them increasingly unpopular in the face of Pentecostal spirituality, while others have responded to pressure to change (Parsitau, 2011).

2.2.4. Neo-Pentecostals

For the purpose of this study, Neo-Pentecostals are discussed separately from the Charismatics, and both are considered as contemporaries. Neo-Pentecostals in this case represent the new, or younger, Pentecostal movements that began in the second half of twentieth century and only started growing rapidly from the 1990s onwards (Parsitau, 2014). Individual pastors independent of any external influence founded most of these churches and ministries (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). Neo-Pentecostalism is the broadest category representing the most rapidly growing Pentecostal Christianity in Kenya and it has influenced almost every denomination (Nyabwari and Kagema, 2014). Although this study treats it as a category on its own, the churches here are not homogenous since they are independent of one another, with different founders and different forms of governance. Contrary to the earlier Pentecostal tendency of concentrating in urban areas, it has, surprisingly,

flourished in the rural setting with overwhelming impact (Nyabwari and Kagama, 2014; Parsitau, 2011).

This category has attracted various names from scholars, though some (including Parsitau) put it in one category with the charismatics. Miller and Yamamori (2007) call them independent Neo-Pentecostals and further identifies a sub-branch that they call progressive Pentecostalism. A recent work by Kenyan scholar Julius Gathogo (2014) argues for ‘Afro-Pentecostalism’, which he uses synonymously with ‘emerging African Christianities.’⁹ This, he claims, arises from the plural nature of African society, dictated by the differences between ethnic groups. Kenya has about forty-two different ethnic groups and each has its cultural beliefs and practices, although commonalities are generally greater than differences. The differences, though, could give rise to distinct Christian practices, as Gathogo claims. Notwithstanding this, Neo-Pentecostalism has characteristics or practices that enable it to be identified as the most rapidly growing spirituality in Kenya (Parsitau and Mwaura, 2010). Additionally, it has significant influence on most spheres of life in Kenya and Africa more broadly, including the religious, social-economic and political environment (Nyabwari and Kagama, 2014).

The first feature is that Neo-Pentecostal Christianity incorporates cultural aspects of the local people that are compatible with the Gospel of Christ, unlike the Mission Christianity that condemned these cultural values and practices. One of the most popularly cited characteristic of general Pentecostalism is celebrative worship (Nyabwari and Kagama, 2014) and this takes from the African culture of singing and dancing. Other characteristics include belief in spiritual/supernatural powers, prophecies and healing. Issues such as sickness and barrenness are not only considered physical but also spiritual, needing spiritual intervention (Gathogo, 2014). Such cultural emphases are expressed in Neo-Pentecostal Christianity – in most cases unconsciously (Anderson 2019) – revealing the importance of the

⁹ Scholars of African Christianity are increasingly acknowledging the complexity of emerging Christian spiritualities so that they are getting convinced that there is need to speak of ‘Christianities’ in plural rather than singular. This arises from the various brands of Christian belief and practice expressed in various African people’s cultural contexts.

African model of concern for the ‘other’, popularly known by its South African name, Ubuntu.¹⁰ This expresses the African human virtues of hospitality and generosity. African spirituality concerns life issues as a whole, emphasising community and the collective responsibility of the persons in society (Mbiti, 1969; Gathogo, 2008). The South African Zulu philosophy of Ubuntu is shared by most communities in Africa, and in Kenya it is referred to as *utu* by the Swahili speakers, *umuntu* by the Meru of Nyambene, and *umundu* by the Kikuyus of central Kenya. These terminologies stand for a personhood that can only be known corporately and the Neo-Pentecostals are profoundly sensitive to this aspect and address not only the spiritual concerns of a person but also their social-economic environment (Nyabwari and Kagema 2014). This has enabled them to stand out as a movement of social change since neo-Pentecostalism is open to new social practices such as a quick appropriation of technology, while they still connect their followers with their worldview.

Pentecostal spirituality resonates with the Ubuntu practices of the African people where one is considered human only in the context of the humanity of others. It values care for one another and Pentecostals emphasise this oneness in the fellowship as a born-again caring spirit. This aspect was observable in my empirical research done in Nyambene Synod as discussed in Chapters Five and Six. The weakness of this kind of social Christianity in the Methodist Church, with its social norms and the communal life of the fellowship of believers, has contributed to the Methodist Church losing members to the Pentecostal churches.

Secondly, Neo-Pentecostals usually resist the formation of denominations and institutionalised styles of church governance (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). Instead, a church may have one or two offshoots that are run by individual pastors and a number of other staff under the leadership of the senior pastor. They have high regard for presentation style and the influence of modernity. The modern

¹⁰ *Ubuntu* is a Zulu phrase for humanness, and *umuntu* in Kemeru. It has roots in humanist African philosophy where the idea of community is fundamental to a society. John Mbiti puts it: ‘I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am’; a person is a person through other people. It emphasise the virtues of humanity and compassion.

presentation of these ministries appeals especially to the young people who are socially mobile and wish to ascend the socio-economic ladder speedily (Meyer, 2004; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013; Parsitau, 2014; Anderson, 2004). Their loose structure gives them flexibility so that they are able to take into account the present moment and the complexity of the contemporary reality of their followers (Bennett et al, 2018). These churches most often choose names that reflect their perception of their church and describe their purpose (Cox, 1996). This means their church names reflect what one would expect if one joined that church – a business-like approach to publicity. The church name is used to advertise the services offered in the church. Names such as Deliverance, Holy Ghost Ministries, Miracle Centre International, A Miracle in the Village and Destiny Shapers, among others, are popular for Neo-Pentecostal churches and ministries. This business-like outlook has influenced the contemporary lived Christianity in Nyambene as revealed by the empirical research (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Another feature of Neo-Pentecostals, particularly those referred to as progressive Pentecostals, (Miller and Yamamori, 2007), is their recent involvement with social activities. This Pentecostal stream of churches, in addition to emphasising the experience of the Holy Spirit, also involves themselves with the social works of the community. Such activities include schools and other training institutions, such as Bible schools, homes for destitute children, counselling services and marriage empowerment training. Miller and Yamamori argue that progressive Neo-Pentecostals are not merely otherworldly, addressing personal salvation, but also seek to meet the social needs of their followers. This is a recent development in most Pentecostal churches, especially those which have settled and started to expand in terms of membership, opening other congregations referred to as branches. Their social activities could be interpreted as an attempt to respond to issues of human concern as well as to maintain and grow their membership. This approach, as this research demonstrates later, reflects the Wesleyan social holiness teaching that expresses the love of God in practice.

While the earlier Pentecostal movements arose out of spontaneous baptism by the Spirit and others owed their existence to colonial hegemony, most Neo-Pentecostal

growth could be attributed to dissatisfaction with the current religious marketplace (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). Others sprang up to fill social relations gaps supposedly left by the mission churches. Pentecostalism, as this literature review argues, can be described as people-centred, and concentrates on practical issues affecting the worshippers, whether spiritual or physical. This is one of its strengths that has contributed to social-religious changes in Nyambene. Research findings support this view, as I argue in chapters five and six. The growth of Pentecostal-oriented churches has continued to be exponential, extending to the rural areas where they were not common earlier (Mwaura and Parsitau, 2010). The Methodist Church in Kenya has been predominantly rural and most of her congregations are found in the rural areas, with very few in towns. This means that the entry of Neo-Pentecostalism in rural settings poses an even a greater challenge to MCK, compared to the earlier Pentecostalism concentrated in urban settings. Pentecostalism as a movement continues to multiply in forms and numbers due to its flexibility. Their system of governance allows for the freedom of the pastor to decide and implement his/her decisions with little resistance or delay, of the kind that is usually experienced in the perceived bureaucracy of MCK. Since most of these churches are not institutional (Miller and Yamamori, 2007) and the Kenyan laws allow the registration of single or individual-owned churches, this encourages the continuous formations of new churches and ministries (Gez and Droz, 2017).

2.2.5. Charismatic Christianity

The word charismatic is derived from the Greek word *charismata* meaning spiritual gifts. ‘Charisma means free gift of the Holy Spirit’ (Kangwa, 2017, p. 130). Therefore, charismatic Christians refers to those Christians who believe in the experience and manifestation of gifts given by the Holy Spirit. Like Pentecostal Christians, they encourage these gifts and believe that any Christian can have them as spiritual gifts that enable them to serve God in different ministries of the church (1 Corinthians 12). Charismatic outbursts were experienced early in the twentieth century and many charismatics progressed to the early African Initiated Pentecostal churches after breaking from their mother churches.

A second upsurge was experienced in 1960s and some scholars including Kangwa (2017) and Bittlinger (1981) attribute its origin to California, USA, where Dennis Bennett, an Anglican priest, claimed that he experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. This renewal spread to the Catholic Church in 1967 and then to the rest of the Christian world. However, as discussed above, charismatic outbursts were experienced much earlier in the mission churches in Kenya. Anderson (2004) claims there was such an experience in western Kenya in 1912. The movement emphasises renewal by insisting on the experiential phenomenon of the spiritual gifts, including faith healing, prophecy, deliverance and speaking in tongues. This group also recognises gifts such as wisdom, discernment, words of knowledge and interpretation of tongues among gifts of the Holy Spirit. Exuberant singing and dancing, lifting of hands and spontaneous prayers are some of the identifiers of charismatic worship. In this research, charismatic Christianity or the Charismatic movement represents a group of Christians who hold the belief of the experience of the Holy Spirit and the expression of spiritual gifts in the ministry and life of the church. However, they do not leave their churches, which are mostly traditional mission churches, but instead seek to revitalize them from within (Bittlinger, 1981; Miller and Yamamori, 2007). We should note, therefore, that there is no hard distinction between these Pentecostal movements and the charismatic renewal movement. Most scholars consider Pentecostal Christianity and charismatic movements as one 'brand'. The only difference is that Pentecostals exist as independent churches while the charismatic movements tend to remain in their mother churches. Thus, in terms of characteristics and impact, they are similar. However, charismatic Christianity may miss the warm embraces and brother-sister gentleness that is always associated with Pentecostal fellowship (Miller and Yamamori, 2007; Omenyo, 2014). Similarly, since they develop within mainline churches, charismatics lack the individual independent approach that is common among the Neo-Pentecostals.

While the wave of charismatic Christianity within traditional mission churches played a significant role in transforming the church, it also created tension, which eventually may have caused the movement of those who felt aggrieved, particularly

the youth. To respond to this tension, some mission churches have had to adopt changes so that they can survive the wave (Parsitau, 2011, p. 131). Additionally, one could argue that mainline church leaders are increasingly finding it difficult to resist the force of charismatic change, although they do not seem prepared. We now turn to discuss some of those distinctive charismatic features of Pentecostalism that shed light for our discussion of the changes in ecclesial affiliations in Nyambene Synod.

2.3.0. Characteristics of Pentecostalism in Kenya

As Pentecostal literature reveals, the following characteristics of Pentecostal Christianity discussed below, have contributed to the growth and expansion of Pentecostalism and are therefore important for our discussion of Pentecostal influence on the religious landscape in Kenya. My main objective in doing an empirical research project is to explore the changes in religious affiliations in Nyambene and therefore the findings of the research will interact with this literature as I seek to understand the situation in Nyambene Synod.

As mentioned earlier, Neo-Pentecostalism, the most recent brand of Pentecostalism, came to the scene in the 90s when most other revival waves had calmed down in Kenya. The influence of the East Africa Revival Movement was fading away and the African Indigenous Churches were becoming slowly irrelevant when Pentecostalism started to grow (Gitau, 2017). The traditional mission churches, however, did not take the Pentecostals seriously because they expected their influence to be short-lived. In an attempt to dismiss their impact, some mission church leaders and members attributed this new movement to factors like emotional worship, witchcraft, mere youthful excitement and the illiteracy of followers. However, this brand of Christianity has grown tremendously to be ‘...the most powerful and visible evidence of religious renewal and influence in the country’ today (Parsitau, 2011, p.128) and constitutes the fastest growing group of churches in Kenya. As the Pew Forum (2010) survey reveals, more than half of Kenya’s population, and seven out of ten Protestants, are Pentecostals.

A research project done in Kenya by Droz and Gez (2017), which my own research findings corroborate, suggests that the Kenyan religious landscape is turbulent, with

Neo-Pentecostal movements springing up haphazardly, making it a challenge both to the mission churches and to the citizens who can no longer differentiate between them. It is increasingly becoming a challenge to know which of these movements is genuine, because many unscrupulous ‘pastors’ have entered the field and use the movement as a way of earning a living (Gitau, 2017). This is worse in the rural areas where most of the congregants are semi-illiterate, jobless residents seeking a spiritual experience that can explain their situation and offer hope. A functionalist account explains the growth of these movements by suggesting that their value can be assessed by their usefulness to humankind (Cox, 1996). Key characteristics of Pentecostalism that are widely acknowledged by scholars to have contributed to its ability to powerfully transform society are discussed below as Pneumatic Spirituality and Worship, Sensitivity to Contextual Issues, the Doctrine of Prosperity, Structural Flexibility, Independent Governance, and Communication.

2.3.1 Pneumatic Spirituality and Worship

Pentecostal Christianity believes in baptism by the Holy Spirit after conversion, and in the experience and expression of spiritual gifts manifested through speaking in tongues, miracles, exorcism, and in vigorous worship. Asamoah-Gyadu, in addressing the rise of Pentecostalism and its attraction to the youth, argues that it can only be explained in reference to the work of the Holy Spirit (2013). He argues that

As an enthusiastic form of religion, pneumatic Christianity generally promotes radical conversions, baptism of the spirit with speaking in tongues, healing, deliverance, prophetic ministries and other such pneumatic phenomena including miracles and supernatural interventions in general. (2013, p. 2)

Kenyan Pentecostal churches built a strong foundation on the experience of the Holy Spirit, which, as Asamoah-Gyadu asserts, is one of the characteristics that is behind its powerful explosion in Africa. This spiritual experience involves emotional worship, miraculous acts and manifestations like prophecy and deliverance, which address the worshipers’ here-and-now concerns. This study found that one of the desires of Kenyan Christians is to have a faith that touches and addresses their current situations. This can be understood from their

background of ATR, which professed a God who was believed to interact with the people in their daily lives and who in most times responded to their issues promptly. At the same time, the traditional churches still hold onto Western mission forms of worship that promote the singing of hymns and reading prayers with minimal physical and emotional involvement. This prompted the Pentecostals (and the general populace) to refer to the mission churches as ‘without the Holy Spirit’¹¹ while Pentecostals were referred to as ‘the churches of the spirit’ (*kanica cia kirundu* in the Meru language). Pentecostals take the experience of the book of Acts seriously and they expect their followers to experience the pattern of Peter’s sermon: ‘Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 2:38). Wagner (2016), in his article describing the factors that led to the vigorous growth of the Pentecostalism, says that for most of them conversion is a radical life-changing experience that comes with power not only to speak in tongues but also to evangelize and live a life of purity. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) similarly observes that for the Pentecostals salvation is a transformative experience. The Holy Spirit also, according to Parker (1984), gave the converts ability to do supernatural things that by nature they could not do. These include faith healing, prophecy, deliverance, ecstatic worship and other spiritual manifestations. Many supposed this new power had been missing in the church since the revivals of the first half of the century had waned, leaving a passive and almost spiritually disconnected church, as described by Mombo (2017). Pentecostalism thus presented itself as a source of hope for those who sought a more intimate and practical connection with the supernatural power of God. In the face of the economic challenges in Nyambene at the time, in the context of the whole country, Pentecostalism became a better option for personal success, influencing people’s mind-set through encouraging sermons and promised supernatural interventions (Lindhardt, 2015). Bowen holds this view and argues that these churches were accepted ‘because they brought new physical and spiritual experience of healing, tongues, prophecy...which went beyond the mind’ (2007,

¹¹ The Methodist Church I grew in was regularly accused of having ‘no Spirit’, since having the Holy Spirit here meant more often than not the speaking in tongues that characterises most Pentecostal/charismatic movements and churches.

p.157). A desire to engage with the supernatural in order to influence present life attracted people to the Pentecostal pneumatic worship.

Pentecostal churches encourage prayers that require the active emotional participation of each Christian, as opposed to the liturgical prayers common in the mission churches. For the Pentecostals, baptism of the Holy Spirit connects the Christian with an all-encompassing, all-powerful God in a personal way. Thus, all personal needs are directed to the omnipotent God in prayer. Pentecostals, according to Asamoah-Gyadu, believe prayer 'to have the power to stir the supernatural by decimating the powers of evil and releasing the anointing of the Spirit' (2013 p. 35). This is indeed evident from the way they pray in authoritative voices when addressing the evil spirits to obey and commanding release through miracles. Coming from a background where prayers are expected to receive immediate response, African Christians desire an experiential religion that alleviates their troubles, and a God they can feel whose interventions they experience in their lives. Pentecostals encourage their members to pray spontaneously 'in the Spirit', in a language of their choice and in any posture, although many stand throughout the prayer time. This could take thirty minutes to one hour with short interludes of soft music. Shouting and other emotional expressions, including crying, are encouraged. According to Wagner (2016), it is during this intimate encounter that manifestations of the spirit are experienced in terms of tongues, revelations and prophecy. He also argues that prayer and fasting is emphasised and most of the time great outpouring of the Holy Spirit is experienced after days of fasting. This is unlike mission churches, where prayers are said by one person and usually read from the liturgy books. These prayers are often deprived of any emotional appeal and this prompts mainline youths and Pentecostal worshippers to perceive them as powerless.

Pentecostal manners and styles of worship, which involve spontaneous prayer, ecstatic singing and dancing, Bible reading and the strict practice of Christian disciplines, are believed to be the product of the Holy Spirit. This could be a purposed endeavour to provide an alternative to what the mission churches offered. According to Kuipers (2011), Pentecostals focus on highly emotional worship coupled with popular lyrics that encourage an experience that is not found in the

mission churches. Spontaneity and orality is an African cultural feature which is expressed effectively within Pentecostalism. These churches therefore offer an auspicious context for the African Christian to feel at home – to be a Christian and yet remain Kenyan (African). Singing, dancing, clapping and lifting of hands, using choruses and songs composed with an African tune, rhythms and vigour: these touch their hearts and are in contrast to the traditional mission churches' hymns sung from books to foreign tunes (Gifford, 2009 p. 110). Pentecostal elements of freedom and flexibility are expressed in their topical sermons that address real life issues such as HIV/Aids, poverty, witchcraft and other social concerns. Prayers are offered for those who could be threatened by any social, economic or religious problem and people are promised deliverance from demonic spirits. This prompt response to current situations is not evidenced in the Methodist Church because MCK follows a liturgy that guides their services, an approach criticised by my research participants, who claim that the MCK is disconnected from issues facing its members. The Pentecostal style of worship, on the other hand, brings joy to the worshipper since it entails familiar practices that the African can identify with, and responds to the deep-seated concern about the supernatural that mission Christianity did not address. Nthamburi (2000) and Mugambi (1995) emphasise the need for the Kenyan mainline church to adjust to the new social demands from its members if it is to make sense to contemporary society.

The singing that is enriched by the use of African instruments such as drums, *kayamba*, and flute is also attractive to many people, although in the contemporary Pentecostal churches these are slowly being replaced by modern music instruments that are equally attractive to the youth. This research found that many Pentecostal churches invest in this modern music equipment, while Methodist churches prioritize other needs, prompted their youth to seek the feel of modern music from the Pentecostal churches.

Pneumatic spirituality and worship, contrary to popular traditional churches' perception, is not merely an entertainment. Rather, it acts as a medium to connect the worshipper with supernatural power deeply and emotionally, such that this power influences their current situation. This to the worshipper presents the kind of church they desire, that will meet their personal needs. While vigorous and

emotional worship remains a popular practice of Pentecostalism that is appreciated by many worshippers and recognised by scholars as contributing to its growth and expansion, it has also influenced the traditional churches who have adopted many of its practices (Nyabwari and Kagama, 2014). To satisfy a desire for vigorous worship, young people today would therefore not necessarily need to leave the mission churches. However, my empirical research in Nyambene Synod shows that young people still move, meaning that pneumatic worship on its own is not the only characteristic contributing to religious movement. We move on to further characteristics now.

2.3.2. Sensitivity to Contextual Issues

The kind of worship and spirituality desired by Kenyan worshippers, as I will discuss later, seems to be dictated by personal religious desires that are in turn determined by their context. Unlike traditional churches that emphasise religious faithfulness and the historic creeds that seem oblivious to the contemporary context, Pentecostals respond appropriately to the contextual issues facing their worshippers. Contextualization is the interpretation of the gospel in terms of local context and involves taking into account the local experience and culture as influenced by social location and social change (Bevans, 2002). Contextualization involves the act of interpreting the word of God in context, in order to connect with one's worldview, as the interpreter seeks to unwrap the gospel and present it relevantly to the recipient. The current Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity that is spreading so wildly does not necessarily emphasise an African worldview directly, but its practices demonstrate an awareness of that worldview and interaction with it (Meyer, 2004; Lindhardt, 2015). Pentecostals present a theology that makes sense to people in different life situations and pass it on through their preaching, singing and other activities that address current needs (Anderson, 2019). This is possible since, unlike mission churches, they do not follow a fixed liturgical routine and so they can easily contextualise their Christian messages and activities to be meaningful to the adherents.

One of the ways in which Pentecostals attend to local issues is through their recognition of the integration of religion with all other spheres of life. This is contrary to the individualistic faith often propagated by the mission churches through the idea of individual salvation. For an African, religion is life and life is religion as expressed by Mbiti who describes an African as ‘notoriously religious’ (1989, p.1). Religion permeates all spheres of life and Africans seek spiritual solutions and interpretations to all life’s happenings. Therefore, any religion that is not addressing life issues holistically will not make much impact, since Africans do not separate religion and other life issues. For instance, healing rituals were attractive not only to those who could not afford to access health services, but also because sickness is understood to have physical *and* spiritual causes. As Pentecostals note, this understanding is biblical, and involved the Christian in a fight with powers and spiritual forces (Ephesians 6:12). To counter these powers spiritual interventions are required which the Pentecostal churches provide in the healing and deliverance services.

Neo-Pentecostal pastors strongly condemn many African cultural practices, including witchcraft, polygamy, veneration of ancestral spirits, traditional healers and diviners. Nonetheless, they take spiritual forces seriously and conduct prayers to avert their negative effects from their members (Meyer, 2004). Gifford (1990) interprets this as a confirmation of their effort to dissociate from traditional cultural practices. However, in my view, the continuous practice of deliverance and healing services and exuberant singing and dancing, points to the extent to which African beliefs and practices are being interrelated with Christian faith (see Meyer, 2004). Converts find it challenging to escape from the forces emanating from their local culture (Nthamburi, 2000).

Contextualisation thus enables Pentecostal churches to present a functional faith that meets African religiosity (Oduyoye, 2017). Pentecostal Christianity resonates well with many aspects of African traditional culture and worldview; it recognises the influence of the spirit world and takes responsibility to connect their members with it while at the same time devising ways of assuring protection from the malevolent spirits. Kuipers argues that

This ability to align Christianity with an African worldview allows Pentecostals to not only localize the gospel but also make Christianity relevant to the socio-economic and political realities of its followers. (2016, p.95)

Kuipers' argument is in line with that of scholars like Nthamburi (2000), Mombo (2017), O'Donovan (1995), and Bosch (1998). By recognising the African spiritual worldview, Pentecostals are able to make God a present reality in the lives of their members. Kuipers further argues that

Such a spiritual embodiment of the now and here, left little need for the "escapism" previously taught by western missionaries who emphasised the after-world instead of the here and now. (2016, p.93)

Thus, we could argue that Pentecostal spirituality has succeeded because of the failure of traditional mission churches to articulate Christian teachings into a contextual practical faith. Lindhardt (2015) holds a different view, arguing that Pentecostals propagate an escapist faith as they teach their members to take their issues to God in faith. However, it seems that Lindhardt and Kuipers are using the term 'escapism' differently – what is clear is that Pentecostal believers bring their everyday life to God and expect God to respond.

Evil or bad spirits existed in the African worldview and a way of protection was provided for through charms and specific prayers of protection. Pentecostal spirituality, unlike mission Christianity, corresponds with this as they constantly pray for the binding of demons that are perceived to cause human suffering (Lindhardt, 2015). The use of anointing oil has increasingly become popular and has successfully replaced the traditional charm to protect believers from harm. On the other hand, traditional mission churches concentrated more on other issues like structures and policies that promoted a western/Christian culture, forgetting the spiritual world which, it is believed, constantly influences the physical world of their adherents (Nyabwari and Kagema, 2014).

Additionally, music has been an attractive element of Pentecostal Christianity that is liked and enjoyed by all, including non-Christians, because it is embedded deeply in the culture. Pentecostal spirituality captures the high expression of emotions

through its enthusiastic worship and, particularly, its music. Due to the orality of African traditions and religion, singing communicates and expresses joy, pain, hope, war, peace, victory and other emotions (Lindhardt, 2015). This expression of lived experience was cut off by the missionaries who condemned African cultural practices, including their dancing in celebration of life events such as harvest, circumcision, marriage, and naming (Nthamburi, 2000). These repressed emotions found expression in Pentecostal Christianity, especially due to the flexibility these movements exhibited in welcoming everyone without making demands on them. Pentecostal Churches do not require newcomers to undergo any membership training¹² as was and is happening in the Methodist Church. Music is crucial for attracting congregants and this encourages the pastor (who may double as owner of the congregation) to invest heavily in musical instruments. It is common to find a small church in a rural area with an expensive musical set that plays loud music early on Sundays before members arrive. This often has the effect of attracting more people, Music has played a significant role in the growth of Pentecostal movements (Gez, 2018), which provided a free environment for the young to develop their musical skills as they entertain themselves.

Pentecostals further demonstrate their sensitivity to context through the recognition of the communal aspect of African people. Individualism, or private life, is alien to Africans, as Mbiti (1989) emphasised. Pentecostals teach and emphasise transformational salvation that brings about change and the communal experience of spiritual gifts. This transformation produces born-again Christians who are brothers and sisters in Christ. They are further nurtured into a family that cares for one another by providing an environment of love and fellowship (Gathogo, 2014; Droz and Gez, 2017). The practical faith implied by this Pentecostal Christian fellowship resonates with the African system of family, including extended family connections, where the welfare of the large family is a responsibility of all

¹² Membership training for new converts was and still is a requirement in the Methodist church. It also applies to children born into the church. At the age of twelve, they undergo a training of between three to six days to be received into the full membership of the church that they were born into and baptised as children. It is then that they are allowed to partake of Holy Communion. Pentecostals receive new members as they are.

members. Given that communal and family life is one of the essential features of African socio-religious life, living an individual or private life, in the way propagated by mission Christianity, is not attractive to African Christians. The current drift from communal to individual faith and individual Christian lifestyle in the Methodist Church – as this research reveals – may therefore mean that the church loses touch with the communal life that was the original hallmark of Wesleyan Methodism (Abraham, 2019), and is so important in African society. Social gatherings found in the Pentecostal churches in the form of Bible study groups, seminars, and retreats provide contexts of socialization akin not only to African lifestyle but to also original Methodism.¹³

The Pentecostal churches' ability to identify with the social context enables the church to address life issues affecting its members. It portrays a profound sensitivity to the community and their needs, making its practice of prophecy, exorcism, deliverance, visions and tongues popular to most Kenyans who are driven by a desire for miracles. Due to great human suffering, Kangwa (2017) contends, there is a high drive for people to seek deliverance from life-threatening conditions and situations, including poverty, HIV/Aids, and diabetes. Following African traditional practices, where people consult diviners, witchdoctors and healers, Omenyo says the Pentecostals present Jesus 'not only as the eschatological saviour, but also as the healer, the deliverer from malevolent spirits and the great provider of every good thing' (2014, p.141). For Christianity to replace the traditional religion effectively, it has to offer an alternative way of addressing the needs that were catered for by the traditional religion. A religion that intervenes in the living situations of the people and everydayness of its adherents is perceived to be missing in the Methodist Church. Indeed this research has revealed that the interaction between Christianity and its social-religious context is key in determining the appeal of a church, as discussed later.

2.3.3. Doctrine of Prosperity

¹³ See Chapter Five.

Prosperity Gospel is also known as ‘theology of prosperity’, ‘Gospel of prosperity’, ‘Health and Wealth Gospel’ or ‘Faith Gospel’ (Parsitau, 2014). This view holds that ‘prosperity of all kinds including good health is the right of every Christian to claim, particularly if one gives generously to the proponents of the prosperity gospel who are also founders of these churches’ (Gifford, 2009, p.375). Thus, there is a correlation between giving to the pastor and prospering. This preaching of a message of prosperity or alleviation from poverty has gained significant support in Kenya. In a recent research on *How an African Worldview Encounters the Teachings of the Prosperity Gospel in Nairobi Kenya*, Evans (2016) contends that a prosperous life is a natural human desire for everyone, regardless of their race or nationality. A good prosperous life varies depending on the community, context and individuals in question, and so this desire is also expressed in different forms. Before the coming of Christianity, the people in Nyambene used to worship God and give sacrifices that included animal sacrifices and farm produce that they placed at designated places for God (*Murungu*) to consume. Similarly, they take their offerings freely to church, which is now a designated place for God. They do this as a sign of thanksgiving or as prayer, after which they expect a blessing, or an answer to their prayers, or protection from evil spirits. Giving to God is thus not new and has a relationship with the quality of one’s life. If one is prosperous, it is perceived as a blessing and mostly attached to the person’s good relationship with God, as Evans (2016) noted. If a calamity or any misfortune happened, it was blamed on the community or the person concerned. Therefore, prosperity as a concept is not new to the people, and neither is its relationship with God’s blessings. The same view is held by Omenyo, who argues that the message is popular due to ‘its resonance with the African concept of salvation, abundant life, and the very practical African understanding of the goal of worship’ (2014, p.140). The Prosperity Gospel could also be popular because of the high poverty levels, vulnerability and suffering in Kenya, where people are attracted to messages of hope and promises of better life. Amanze (2008) argues that the theology of prosperity attracts large numbers to the Pentecostal churches, but criticises the teaching for exploiting human frailties in order to support the lavish lifestyle of the pastor. As Gifford (2009) found out in his research in Kenya, these messages are

accompanied by motivational messages that leave the followers highly elated and expectant. Most of the members of these churches range from poor to middle class, who come in search of the rich, good God (Parsitau, 2014). To remove difficulties or hardship of any kind in one's life, one needs to obey God and claim his promises in scripture (Omenyo, 2014). Pentecostal pastors challenge their members to rise above their social deprivation, which (according to Pastor Lai) only happens through belief. Pastor Lai, one of the pioneering televangelists in Kenya, claims 'the only reason you do not walk in the covenant blessing is unbelief' (Gifford 2009, p.129). Pentecostals believe and preach that one should believe in God and seek his kingdom and that all other things shall follow (Mathew 6:33). Looking at their theological beliefs, they preach and believe in receiving social, economic, political, health and spiritual success as a result of belief in God (Kangwa, 2017). The pastor blames unbelief for unmet needs and this keeps the Christians still hopeful.

In addition to belief, Pentecostal pastors preach and teach about giving, attaching it to opening one's blessing and encouraging members to give to the pastor and the church (Gifford, 2009). A desire for miracles is a driving factor especially because most people in Kenya experience lack and human suffering. As they desperately seek deliverance from these problems, they do not hesitate to take the teaching and counsel of their pastor linking giving to the opening of blessing. Prosperity Gospel pastors draw on this as they act as the mediators between their congregants and God as agents of God's blessings and hope. They are therefore perceived to dispense blessings to their members at a fee that is coded to appear as a gift to God. Members are encouraged to *panda mbegu* (a Swahili term for 'plant a seed'), which is money, given in faith, that is expected to open one's blessings, avert calamities and heal diseases (Evans, 2016; Gifford, 2009). The pastor might promise a hundredfold in return so people continue to be drawn to these churches with a hope of a better life where their material, physical and spiritual needs will be fulfilled.

The emphasis on the gospel of prosperity by many Pentecostal churches has transformed Christianity into a transactional fellowship where a worshipper gives in return for spiritual benefits. This is a consumer-producer relationship where the consumer has a right to choose the goods he/she would like to 'purchase', consequently determining the nature of the product. Research by Gez (2018) in

Kenya proves the existence of such a relationship, in which pastors are inquiring from their congregants what services they would like to receive. While it is human to desire to have enough to live on, and even more to enjoy a good life, it would be unacceptable to manipulate people's giving with the promise of spiritual favours. The gospel of prosperity is often in danger of presenting a God who sells his blessings to Christians who are able to buy them. This would mean that the acquisition of wealth, health and other blessings lies in the congregants' ability to give (Omenyo, 2014). Some pastors advocate different types of prayer, such as dedications, praying for a job, healing and deliverance, breakthrough, breaking of barrenness, promotion, among others. Each prayer might have a different offering to 'open doors' as Omenyo (2008) notes. This clearly suggests a different religious environment in which people now view religion from a commercial point of view and tend to join a church that they feel takes care of their preferences. Religious consumerism as a contemporary concept of religion determining religious affiliations is discussed in Chapter Five.

2.3.4. Structural Flexibility and Governance

Institutionalized churches have a clear laid-down structure that is known and followed by all its adherents. Their bureaucratic way of leadership means that churches are quite formal and routine. This system gives the mission churches a strong unified voice, especially if they are addressing a social or political issue. Most mission churches have a central governance system where the whole church is governed from the top. In this system, members' views are often taken into consideration through democracy. One weakness of this system, however, is the slow pace at which decisions are reached and implemented and the controls on the authority of leaders due to the many committees representing different governance levels. In contrast, the Pentecostal system provides the pastor almost total control of their church or movement, particularly because they do not institutionalise their churches (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). They are thus able to dictate the direction the church takes and speed of both spiritual and physical development. As the church face the challenges of rapid changes, Nthamburi says that Christians follow uncritically those who seem to offer priority to societal desires. He suggests that

‘the conservatism of the African church, especially in its structure, doctrines, liturgies, rules and regulations must give way to more flexible patterns’ (2000, p.137). This looks inevitable in the face of the current challenges facing the mission churches. Bowen, exploring skin-deep mission Christianity, contends that for Christianity in Africa to flourish, it must ‘adapt or perish’ (2007, p.140). As research findings reveal, structures and systems of the Methodist Church are still under heavy criticism and since they have remained rigid, the youths tend to leave (see chapter four).

2.3.5. Communication

By communication here, I mean the passing, sharing or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other visual medium. The end of the single party political system in Kenya in 1990 gave way to a multi-party system that opened up democratisation and a liberal space for the media which had earlier been suppressed and prevailed upon to air only what pleased the leadership (Gez and Droz, 2017). Many independent channels opened up and provided liberal dissemination of information, making it possible for Churches and ministries to start using radios, and televisions to air their services and sermons. Currently, this has increasingly become the major mode of communication by these churches and ministries, in addition to the overwhelming use of social media. This has revolutionized Christianity as videos of highly motivational sermons, healing and deliverance services flood television channels and social media. Voices that could otherwise never have been heard are now heard through the paid airwaves (Parsitau, 2014; 2011). In the last ten years, radio and television stations using local ethnic languages have been opened and this provides village churches with a means to reach their members in a local dialect. While the Methodist Church did not on the whole make use of these new methods of communication, young Pentecostal preachers did, disseminating their messages through the airwaves and social media. More recently, the outbreak of COVID-19 has awakened MCK to the need to use mass and social media for preaching and discipleship, while churches are shut. The ongoing impact of the virus to church communication is yet to be established and studied.

In Nyambene, where this research was based, like many other rural Kenyan places, technological communication was not well developed until recently, when the current mobile telephone provider Safaricom provided a mobile phone network in around 2002. This therefore remains an area of growing development for all churches.

The local Pentecostal churches regularly preach and pray for listeners on these airwaves. Mwaura and Parsitau (2010) observe this and note that this use of the media enables them to reach a wider population. Indeed, they reach not only their members but also those of the mission churches and some end up joining these churches after watching them on television performing miracles. In addition, mission church members also send money to the Pentecostal pastors so that the pastor can pray for them.

Since individual pastors start and own these churches, one of the first necessary preparations they do is to invest heavily in musical equipment, including generators to stand in for any power disruption, as is experienced very often in Kenya (Gifford 2009 p 153). This is used to bring more people to the church, which in most cases is in a hired building. Loud music is played, even if the people are few, and many more keep joining the church since they assume the loud music is coming from a large crowd. The Pentecostal churches' proximity to the residential areas provide ready options to those whose commitment to their own churches is weak. They are accessible to anybody who is interested since they are found in most village shopping centres in hired rooms. They also commonly use tents as long as the pastor is assured of enough membership from the neighbourhood.

Another way these churches communicate is through the names that creatively play on spiritual desires and expectations. These are names such as Maximum Miracle Centre, Restoration Centre, Jesus Celebration Centre, Hope Ministries, Victory Worship Centre, and Prophetic Prayer Ministries among others. The posters they use to publicise their activities are equally creative, using phrases such as 'empowerment summit', 'spiritual encounter', 'impartation conference', and 'Holy Ghost revival' among others. Pentecostal churches' innovation in marketing their churches is incomparable and this suggests that they not only perceive their

churches as spiritual hubs to preach the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also as self-development ventures.

2.4.0. Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the interaction of different expressions of religion and the subsequent changes in the Kenyan religious landscape. The narrative has shown a general trend towards Pentecostal expressions of Christianity, and a movement away from mission Christianity. It is claimed that the major reasons include the ability of the Pentecostal church to encourage pneumatic worship and promote spiritual gifts for the benefit of the worshippers. Pentecostalism is also recognised as being alert to people's yearnings and responding to them appropriately, especially the contemporary issues that affect congregants. Prosperity brought about by being a believer is emphasised and Christians are promised blessings when they give to the church or pastor. Structures and relevant means of communication have also featured. Without any intention of dismissing the full spectrum of characteristics, I offer here two of them that stand out as key to the changing affiliations in Nyambene Synod, which will require further exploration through my empirical research. Pneumatic spirituality and worship accompanied by sensitivity to contextual issues are, I suggest, the two factors that are weighty and impactful to the Kenyan Christian.

Pneumatic spirituality and worship not only mean a physical expression of wild emotions, as some may think, but rather indicates a spiritual resonance with the African worldview leading to the spiritual fulfilment of real human needs. The Holy Spirit becomes the medium through which Christianity penetrates into believers' lives and influences them positively in what Miller and Yamamori (2007) call 'social-uplift'. Contrary to the perceived notion that the Pentecostal churches only capitalise on vulnerability and emotional intensity, their ability to understand and respond to real issues affecting their congregants is outstanding. The integration of spiritual and social worlds creates a holistic life for their followers. We could argue that although orderliness, as is emphasised by mission churches in their structures and systems, is important, it loses meaning if it does not facilitate the holistic wellbeing of Christians and even more so if it is not liberating them from the bondage of evil. Pneumatic Christianity connects the worshipper with God in the

present everyday context and brings God's power into their experience such that they feel God relates with them more closely and attends to their human needs.

A superficial appeal to pneumatic worship would not, however, sustain a strong Christian life and growth on its own. Parsitau argues that the Neo-Pentecostals' tremendous growth and presence does not necessarily point to a tremendous spiritual reformation and transformation in Kenya (2011, p.129). Spiritual nomadism, where Christians keep moving from one church to another, still exists (Gez and Droz, 2017), and is an indication that the picture of church affiliation continues to develop. This raises the question as to how far pneumatic worship alone determines movement from one church to another. The complexity of addressing social-religious, personal and communal needs by means of the Holy Spirit is also noteworthy. There is a danger of appropriating and attempting to manipulate the Holy Spirit for selfish gains and thus tainting the identity and mission of the church. This is explored in more detail in chapter five as a contemporary development of pneumatic Christianity into religious consumerism. The second, related factor is sensitivity to contextual issues, which makes Pentecostal Christianity at home, not only in Nyambene but also in the whole of Africa as it fosters the humanism of the African people and interacts with contemporary social changes affecting its adherents. The extent to which Pentecostalism can better address the desire for *Ubuntu*, or communalism than the mission churches, will need to be explored further as we progress in this research. The factors considered above have given the picture of Pentecostalism as a movement that is progressing fast and demonstrating its ability to produce changes, not only in religion but also social life. Secondly, it is revealed that mission churches faced multiple schisms that led to establishment of the AICs, and AIPCs, which tried to restore that which they felt was missing. A desire for a holistic religion contributed to the fast growth of Pentecostalism, which seems to provide that kind of faith.

These key factors are inevitably complex. Nthamburi (2000) suggests that the multiplicity of denominations is a result of secularism, while Okpong (2018) blames the rise of different church expressions on the inability of the mission churches to provide a Christian faith that is culturally liberating and spiritually

fulfilling. The rapid growth of Pentecostal Christianity taking place therefore does not only indicate a dissatisfaction with the existing religious atmosphere, but also a response to the political, social and economic factors in different times and location. In his work *Sociological Narratives and the Sociology of Pentecostalism*, Wilkinson (2004) discusses dominant factors that he claims have shaped religion. These includes secularization, religious organizations, religious market and religious individualization. The findings from the empirical research will highlight in greater detail than the literature discussed here some of these factors related to the religious market and individualization.

No doubt the Pentecostal movement has spread fast, but it should not escape our attention that unlike mission Christianity, which was a pioneer, Pentecostals found a ready audience compared with earlier missionaries. The ground was prepared for them, by the successful introduction of Christianity by Western missionaries to adherents of ATR and by the development of spiritual dissatisfaction, which Pentecostals sought to fulfil.

One of the changes driven by Pentecostal spirituality is the spread of generalised grass-root ‘pentecostalising’ of Christianity, in which traditional churches appropriate Pentecostal ethos and practices and try to mirror some of its benefits (Deacon and Lynch, 2013). Other churches see Pentecostal churches as competitors and react with hostility and aggression towards the competitor (Counted, 2012; Gez and Droz, 2017). Either way, as Parsitau claims, Pentecostal growth and development reveals a qualitative influence and impact on theological reformation and religious renewal in East Africa (2011, p.129). Improved services, as an attempt to retain members, is also experienced in the mainline churches (Gez and Droz, 2017).

In conclusion, to this chapter, it is useful to note the response of the Methodist Church in Kenya to these changing religious affiliations. Like many other traditional churches in Africa, MCK has not been dissatisfied by the effectiveness of Christianity among its members, but has nevertheless been faithfully adhering to the guidelines, ethos and practices inherited from its Western missionaries. For the MCK, this dependence continues so much so that the church still follows the liturgical order of service developed over a hundred years ago and maintains the

Methodist structures of leadership left by missionaries (Nthamburi, 1982). The prevalent migration of young people from MCK to the Pentecostal churches has not yet made enough impact to cause a decisive response from MCK leadership, but it is beginning to cause concern and worry to some church leaders at congregational level. Rev. Nthamburi, a religious studies professor in Kenya and a former presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya (1993-2002), saw this trend developing early, and as a result, he proposed a new model for the Kenyan church in the twenty first century. In his book *The Pilgrimage of the African Church: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, Nthamburi (2000) urges rethinking the expression of faith in terms of contemporary culture and practice. Among other things, he recommended a review of church laws and structures with a view to making the church more relevant to its African adherents. Despite his awareness of the challenges facing the Methodist Church and the need for rethinking faith, little focus has been directed on this – a demonstration of the disconnection between scholarship and practice in the Kenyan church and, more specifically, the Kenyan Methodist Church. This research therefore takes its impetus from the urging of Nthamburi and seeks to discover how the church can respond to the contemporary context while also being faithful to, and recapturing, its Wesleyan roots in the social holiness of Christian fellowship and love. Findings from this research reveal that the need to rethink church is growing and the Methodist Church may have no option but to purposively explore appropriate ways of responding to the challenge from religious denominational migration. Our literature review here has set the scene now for the empirical part of this research, which will explore the impact of Pentecostal Christianity on the Methodist Church in the Nyambene Synod, as a springboard for theological and practical reflection.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This research arose from observations made in Nyambene Synod of young people moving from the Methodist Church to the Pentecostal churches and the exponential growth of Pentecostal churches. To explore these religious changes and the impact they have on the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) in the Synod, this research adopts a practical theological research framework to address the research question. According to Bennett et al., ‘practical theology reckons to promote research that is experience-based and reality-near so that it can provide insight into the contemporary world’ (2018, p.171). Practical theological research is practice-based and therefore it can be best explored where the practitioners are. Thus, it illuminates people’s reality and experience (Bennett et al. 2018), or rather, faith in practice. In this research, a qualitative empirical approach has been used in addition to literature review to explore the phenomenon of religious affiliation. Since this research aims to study and inquire into the experience and meaning making of Christians in Nyambene Synod concerning changes in ecclesial affiliation, the research uses a constructive approach, which is well suited to a qualitative research method.

3.1. Qualitative Research Methodology

This study makes use of a qualitative research approach that puts emphasis on individual’s views and personal experiences (Denscombe, 2007, p.76). According to Bryman (2008), the qualitative approach uses words rather than quantification. It is thus different from a quantitative methodology that uses numbers and figures in the collection and analysis of data. Further, a qualitative method emphasises ‘exploration and narration of feelings, perceptions and experiences rather than their measurements’ (Kumar, 2014, p.14). This empirical study seeks to understand the changes taking place in ecclesial affiliation in Nyambene. As this is a social reality, my qualitative research strategy allowed participants to describe their experience of the phenomenon as they understood it. According to Chakraborty, a qualitative approach allows the researcher to ‘acquire an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern human behaviour’ (2009, p.235) and explores

meanings individuals or groups attach to social situations. Qualitative research is preoccupied with the depth and quality of experience, and particularly how participants make sense of or understand and interpret their experiences in the world they live (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). In this research, my purpose of exploring the movements of younger Christians and their choice of church is achieved by understanding how individuals make sense of their own experience.

This research took an inductive analytical approach in that information and concepts emerged from the data collected and were discussed in the light of existing literature. Taylor, Bodgan, and DeVault claim that ‘researchers develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data rather than collecting data to assess preconceived models, hypothesis or theories’ (2016, p.8). It was imperative to research the changes and movements in the context of my participants rather than relying on theoretical assumptions that could lead to superficial recommendations concerning practice. Thus, in terms of wider changes in church affiliations this study took a bottom-up approach, building up from the ground where faith practitioners live. Their experience on church movements thus informs my practical theology (Bennett et al. 2018). Qualitative research allows the study to look at people holistically in their setting rather than reducing them to variables (Taylor, Bodgan, and DeVault 2016; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). A holistic understanding of the Christians in their context was crucial because it enabled the research to yield interesting and authentic data that gave insights on the changes in religious affiliations in Nyambene to meet my research purpose.

3.2. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Practical theology research involves studying how Christians experience and practice faith in their own context. This research makes use of an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design to study the experienced movement of young people from the MCK to the Pentecostal churches in Nyambene Synod. Phenomenology is a research approach that focuses on how life is experienced by exploring the meanings individuals and groups ascribe to their social realities. It considers the attitudes, beliefs, feelings and emotions of those involved (Denscombe, 2007, Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). I find it useful in my study since

I am interested in understanding the experience and perceptions of Christians concerning the movements of church members (and themselves) from one church to the other.

Phenomenological analysis, which is concerned with exploring in detail how participants perceive and make sense of their own lived social world, attempts to understand what it is like from the point of view of the interviewee. Therefore, it allowed me to penetrate as much as possible into the world of participants by listening and observing, then presenting and interpreting the raw findings. This enabled the production of an account of the respondents' own lived experience in their own terms rather than using preconceived interpretations of a phenomenon (Smith and Osborn, 2015). In addition, a detailed understanding of how movements of Christians between churches are experienced first-hand by those involved was possible since research participants gave their own stories concerning the phenomenon under study.

At the same time, as a researcher, I acted both as an outsider and an insider in the sense that I endeavour to bring out the participants' sense-making of the phenomenon under study and, in turn, document my own sense making of the participants' sense-making (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). This means trying to decode the participants' meaning through interpreting it, hence *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*, and not just Phenomenological Analysis. This process is described as a double hermeneutics or dual interpretation by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012, p.362) because the researcher tries to understand a phenomenon from the participants' point of view or 'seeing things through the eyes of others' (Denscombe 2007, p.77). To succeed in presenting a respondent's experience, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) argue that the researcher needs to bracket their own preconceptions. Denscombe (2007) supports this view by arguing for the suspension of the researcher's common sense to minimise the impact of his/her own assumptions. However, Willig (2008) presents a contrary view as he argues that there is a circularity found in the process of meaning making in that understanding requires moving from presupposition to interpretation and back again. Thus he contends that, instead of bracketing the presuppositions and assumptions, the researcher needs to work with them to enhance his/her understanding of the subject

of study (2008, p.56). Willig recognizes the impossibility of divorcing the experience of the researcher from the research by allowing issues of reflexivity to be addressed to distinguish between comments of the participants and interpretations given by the researcher. In addition, there is need for the researcher to be aware of his/her own value judgements so that they are not used to interpret the participants' words in the sense that the researcher falls into an attempt to justify what he/she knows (Hale et al., 2007)

IPA was found suitable since it recognises that a complete standing-back of the researcher, to allow the participant to bring out the full description of his/her understanding of a phenomenon in study, may not be possible. Instead, the exploration of the participant's experience

must necessarily implicate the researcher's own view of the world, as well as the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant. As a result, the phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is always an interpretation of the participant's experience. (Willig, 2008, p.57)

In essence, the interpretation of the participant's experience of a phenomenon and that of the researcher are both taken into consideration in analysing the data, as it will be presented in chapters five and six.

3.2.1. Why IPA

According to Noon, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is a contemporary qualitative methodology that was first developed by psychologist Jonathan Smith in 1996. Although its roots are in psychology, it is gaining popularity among scholars in the human, social and health sciences (2018, p.75). IPA is widely used in medical research to allow researchers to listen to stories patients tell about their own medical situations. It attempts to get to the basis of their perceptions and interpretations of what they are going through, which is largely influenced by their context and social background. The researcher eventually is able to interpret and analyse the data of the participants' meaning-making to produce a rich account of the issue under investigation. My theological assumption for choosing IPA is that the empirical research that I have carried out and its social analysis are essential to the theological task of relating current practice to the future reflection of the church. Practical theology is not done in a vacuum and therefore practical research is always

participatory (Swinton and Mowat, 2016). Christians are not passive but continually construct their own social-religious existence in reaction to their experience (Denscombe 2007, p.77). Similarly, theology is articulated in a particular cultural context and therefore reacts to issues raised from a particular background. Mugambi is of the same view and puts it thus: 'A theologian cannot theologise in a cultural vacuum, theology is always articulated in a particular cultural context responding to questions which are always culturally conditioned' (1994, p.19).

Using this methodology in my theological research, however, was a new experience for me, although a growing body of literature in practical theology uses IPA. I consider this approach suitable for my study because, according to Smith and Osborn (2015), it is well suited to study complex, emotional and ambiguous issues. My research examines complex religious experiences resulting from interactions between individual Christians, systems and practices within Pentecostal and Mission churches and their ensuing ecclesial affiliations. It is a study in which I encountered feelings that participants found challenging to articulate. Drawing from the basics of phenomenology, empathic and hermeneutical skills and idiography, IPA offers a painstaking attention to detail that allows probing for more information and clarifications through semi-structured interview questions. This in effect allowed participants to describe how they experienced, understood and interpreted events in their world. Interviews thus penetrated some novel areas, producing more data even beyond the expectations, which in essence led to a richer and deeper analysis.

IPA emphasises the depth of the analysis thus it allows the use of small samples of between one and fifteen cases (Denscombe, 2007; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). Since I had limited time for my empirical research, due to the constraints of travel between Cambridge and Kenya, I selected a small sample of six participants. However, due to the in-depth detailed interviews, the research outcome provides data that can be used to understand broader trends (Lightfoot, 2005).

The nature of data required for my research necessitated a deliberate selection of participants that had an experience of the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches. It therefore resonates well with purposive sampling. Purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling, is used where participants are selected, based on a

criteria that would favour the research objectives (Langkos, 2014). Sampling is discussed in detail in section 3.5.

3.3. Study Area

This research was done in Nyambene Synod, which is one of the thirteen synods in the Methodist Church in Kenya. Nyambene synod is in Meru County and occupies three administrative constituencies or sub-counties, which are Igembe Central, Igembe North and Igembe South. The Igembe people, one of the three sub-tribes of the bigger Meru tribe, occupy Nyambene Synod. Others are the Tigania sub-tribe that occupies Miathene and Imenti that occupies Kaaga and Nkubu Synods. Nyambene Synod has myriads of Pentecostal-oriented micro-churches and ministries spread generously over the Synod but it is a near impossible task to get the number of such churches for lack of records and the nature of their multiplication. These churches and ministries are relatively young, with most of them less than thirty years old and usually owned by the founder pastors. For instance, as I drive home every day, I pass five such churches along the road, on a stretch of less than a mile off the tarmac road. Most of Nyambene Synod is predominantly rural with few upcoming towns and many small rural markets or shopping centres.

The Synod has been chosen for study because it is considered suitable to provide information on my research topic, given the prevalence both of these Pentecostal churches and ministries, some of which are stand-alone denominations owned by the pastors in charge, and the Methodist Church, which is the predominant denomination in the area. No other study on the subject that has been done in Nyambene before, with most scholars concentrating on urban areas where Pentecostal mega-churches have mushroomed. Most Methodist Church congregations are traditionally rural with very few congregations in the urban setting. This follows the initial trend of Methodist evangelism that concentrated on rural more than urban areas, with church leadership subsequently planning churches in towns and cities. Therefore, the findings contribute to ongoing debate on the

changing religious environment and particularly the interaction and the response of the MCK to the Pentecostal influence in Nyambene Synod.

3.4. Target population

The study focused on the Pentecost and Methodist Christian denominations in Nyambene Synod and therefore members from both churches, who had experience of moving from one church to the other were selected. Research participants were drawn from within Nyambene Synod and sampled purposively according to their experience of both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches. A sample with common experience is required, so the determining factor was their past or present affiliation with both churches, or their having experience of the two denominations through close association and interaction. It was also important to pick participants for whom the research problem of the movement of younger Christians was relevant and of significance. For this reason, the participants picked were between 23 years and 45 years old, who had been members of either churches for at least four years at the time of the interview. This is important so that the participants would have enough knowledge of their church/congregation to enable them speak about the movements from an informed perspective and experience. This age bracket is considered the vibrant and mobile age group, which is most likely to move and change churches often.

3.5. Sampling

A sample size in qualitative research is difficult to determine and Dongre et al (2009) argue that there is no formula for calculating it. This is supported by Smith and Osborn (2015) who argue that there is no specific sample size, but rather it is dependent on the degree of commitment to the case study, level of analysis, richness of the individual cases and the constraints one is operating within. This study makes use of purposive sampling where a sample is handpicked, or where a researcher deliberately selects a sample of individuals or events that are considered the most likely to provide the most relevant data for the phenomenon under investigation (Denscombe 2007). This research aimed to get knowledge and understanding of the youth movements in Nyambene Synod and so I involved practitioners on the ground

who provided first-hand information about the reality as they experienced it. Six individuals from Nyambene Synod who have experienced changing religious affiliations were drawn from both the Methodist and the Pentecostal Churches. The six interviewees included three from the MCK, and three from three different strands of the Neo-Pentecostal churches in the region, as explained in chapter one (1.6) above. Despite my prior knowledge of the geographical area, I made use of a gatekeeper since I needed to create a good rapport with the participants. The gatekeeper helped in getting a pool of possible participants from which I was able to select those with the experience needed. Therefore, the individuals picked for interviews were believed to have knowledge and experience of the movements taking place between the MCK and the Pentecostal churches in Nyambene and the issue had relevance and significance for them, both personally and organizationally (Pietkiewicz and Smith 2012). The gatekeeper also helped in setting up interview dates and venue. Together with the gatekeeper, purposive sampling allowed the achievement of reaching the targeted sample quickly (Chakraborty 2009). Since IPA aims at a homogenous sample requiring a group that is considered similar in terms of their experience of the phenomenon, random or representative sampling was considered inappropriate.

This research is seeking to understand ecclesial movements experienced in Nyambene Synod and since it looks at both the Pentecostal and the traditional mission churches, purposive sampling was done at two levels; sampling of churches and a further sampling of the interviewees. Bryman (2008) contends that purposive sampling occurs at more than one level depending on the aim of the study. In this case, I picked three Methodist Churches that had experienced mass movement of young people to different Pentecostal Churches in the area, while the Pentecostal churches that are believed to receive members from the Methodist and other traditional churches provided the other three respondents. Thus, I was assured of getting people with the experience of the two denominations, either by affiliating with both or by close association with those who had moved. Each congregation chosen provided one member participating in the interviews, making six

participants. However, individual respondents were contacted directly via the gatekeeper without involving their churches.

My sample size could be seen as small in comparison to quantitative research where the larger the sample size the more accuracy is expected in the estimates reached. As for a qualitative inquiry, the purpose is to explore or describe a situation, an issue or a phenomenon where a sample size is less significant than the selection of the sample itself. Kumar (2014) and Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) state that a single case can be sufficient if selected carefully. It is in this view that I consider the six respondents sufficient for my study. Such a number of participants helped me to avoid collecting so much data that it could overwhelm me, since IPA interviews using semi-structured questions are long and deep requiring time to transcribe and analyse.

I conducted face-to-face interviews with the sampled respondents using open-ended research questions that I had prepared to guide the interviews and tape-recorded them. Denscombe (2007) argues that one of the disadvantages of a small sample of participants is the limitation of the findings, which cannot be generalised to other contexts or to the wider population. However, I agree with Lightfoot that the in-depth study and analytical approach of a few cases can produce themes that can identify with different contexts (2005). It is therefore possible for the themes from such a study to resonate with the experience of a wider population and the small sample size does not need to restrict the validity of the research.

3.6. Methods of Data Collection

Alongside literature review and analysis, my study includes empirical research that makes use of semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. Interviews are person-to-person interactions in the form of an inquiry where a researcher asks questions to the respondent to get information, beliefs or opinions (Kumar, 2014). This interview method was considered a suitable means for my purposes, while acknowledging that there are other methods, including questionnaires and surveys, focus groups, records and document study, observations and oral histories.

Face-to-face interviews were considered appropriate to the IPA study because by, the use of semi-structured questions, they allowed an in-depth and detailed exploration of the movements taking place between different denominations in Nyambene Synod (Denscombe, 2007). As a result, I was able to gain insight into respondent's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences. Unlike other methods, interviews allow direct the interaction of the researcher and respondent and, through probing, the interviewer can collect in-depth information. It was also possible to explain questions in different words for the participant to understand so barriers such as level of education, age or physical limitations did not adversely affect the interview outcomes (Kumar, 2014).

The flexibility of the method enabled the interviewee to use their own words, making it easy for them to express their own minds and to tell their stories about their experience of their lived world. In my particular context, the face-to-face interviews were useful in that it made it possible for participants to use mixed languages (English, Kiswahili and Kimeru) to express themselves and I could also observe and interpret their bodily expressions. On the other hand, interviews have challenges in that the exercise was time consuming and expensive, especially because respondents were picked from different churches across the Synod to avoid concentrating in one region and to promote representation (Kumar, 2014, p.178). The Synod is expansive and I had to travel or meet respondents' travel expenses to the interview venue. In addition, interviews required a suitable environment free from interruptions.

3.7. Research Instruments

This research makes use of semi-structured questions as tools of data collection in face-to-face in-depth interviews. Questions (appendix i), were formulated before the interviews to guide the inquiry and not to dictate the direction of the interview (Eatough and Smith 2011). They were structured in a way that they would assist in achieving the study purpose in line with the method of data collection. My choice of IPA determined the drafting of interview questions that would generate data for phenomenological analysis. Semi-structured questions allowed room for more

questions, depending on the situation and the response of the participants. Interviews in IPA gave respondents freedom to say as much as they wanted about the movements without restriction and, in this sense, respondents were considered as experiential experts who assisted me in knowledge generation (Eatough and Smith, 2011).

Qualitative research aims at generating rich and detailed, or in-depth, accounts of participants' experience of a phenomenon, while a phenomenological approach further requires the researcher to enter the world of the participant as deep as possible (Willig 2008; Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2012). This necessitated the use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews to allow respondents to raise issues they find important. Such questions are flexible in terms of structure, content, question wording and order of asking questions, unlike structured questions that might use predetermined questions with the same wording and order (Kumar, 2014, p.177).

This research benefited from a pre-testing of research instruments (questions) that I had undertaken earlier in preparation for the actual interviews. I picked two participants similar to my intended study population in that they had experience of both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches. This was useful in identifying the challenges that potential respondents were likely to have in understanding and interpreting my questions. I was able to note how different or similar their interpretation was from what I was intending to convey (Kumar, 2014, p.191). Therefore, in response to this exercise, I edited the questions by changing some wording and this made the questions clearer. I also added sub questions to explain more the main question where I had noticed the need to do so.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

This research followed the ethical policy of Anglia Ruskin University, which required me to file an application for approval by the Faculty Research Ethics Panel of the University since the study is dealing with human-to-human interactions. After the approval, I was able to apply and obtained a research permit from the Government of Kenya Research Body in fulfilment of the requirement to apply for

a permit to carry out research within the country. The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) approved my application and allowed me to interact with the respondents. I explained to participants the research I was carrying out; its purpose and their role in this project so that they could evaluate the information and make a decision about participation (Van Stee, 2018). Informed consent was then sought and consent forms provided which I read together with the respondents to make sure they understood before they agreed and signed (see appendix iii). Participants were at liberty to participate voluntarily and assured that they could opt out of the research if they wished.

As a researcher, I was keen to observe and ensure a high level of honesty, objectivity, integrity and confidentiality. I assured participants that their real names would not be used and great effort has been taken to conceal their identity. To achieve this, I replaced their real names with codes to represent each individual participant in addition to avoiding mentioning names of the churches from which they came, to avoid the possibility of people being able to identify an individual participant based on this divulged information. I have maintained anonymity throughout my reporting in reference to the respondents' information. I assured the respondents that information obtained would not be used for any other purpose than the research project and its dissemination.

Security was also ensured, particularly where interviews were done at night due to the unavailability of the respondents during the day. As ethics demands, participants need to be treated with dignity and respect and therefore it was my responsibility to ensure their security, and cultivate an environment of trust so that they could be comfortable to share their stories.

This research faced a number of ethical challenges: the study risked the influence of power since I did this research while still in the office of the Synod bishop. Most of the respondents were either members of the Methodist Church or had been Methodists before they left to join the Pentecostal churches and I was constantly alert that they could feel intimidated by my position. I worked hard to ensure that participants understood that I was conducting interviews as a researcher, and not in

my professional role, and so that both their consent to participate and the information they provided would be used by me within the academic environment.

In addition, power and responsibility were at play in all the interviews (Bennett, et al. 2018). As I listened to five out of six participants, I sensed a deep-seated pain brought about by their collision with, and frustration with the Methodist Church leadership before they finally gave up and left the church. They shared emotional personal encounters of how they were not listened to, not consulted and denied their freedom in their own church and they seemed happy that finally their side of their story was heard. It seemed like this sharing gave them hope and one even hinted to coming back to the MCK if his desires would be addressed. This happened despite my stressing at the beginning of the interviews that the research was purely for academic purpose. These stories did not only heal the respondents but the research challenged my earlier assumptions concerning the youth. I no longer think they are difficult to work with, if only they are given space to share their views and be involved in decisions affecting them. I have since become an active ambassador of their cause in line with the contemporary social-religious reality.

My reflexive awareness helped me to remain aware of my position as I interacted with the respondents so that I did not allow my values and aspirations to override those of my participants (Bennett, 2018). I was also able to notice my respondents' greatest points of vulnerability and remain sensitive while I managed the risk where possible.

In researching my own organization, the MCK, I recognised I was already close to the context and since I had my own aspirations, I remained alert to my responsibility, expectations, and accountability to the church, community, my participants and my academic requirements. Requests to read the finished research by some respondents will be encouraged, according to the participant information sheet that they signed.

3.9. Research Process

The scope of this research was participants from Methodist and Pentecostal Churches in Nyambene Synod. I conducted six interviews with participants drawn

from both churches (1.6) and my movements were determined by where the participant was living within the Synod. Many agreed to meet at a church or church office where we felt it would be quiet for audio recording. Some appointments did not materialize after participants failed to get there in time so that we had to reschedule them. A number of them could only be available at night so I had to facilitate their travel to the interview venue. Interview sessions took between one hour to one hour and fifteen minutes and transcribing that data took quite a long time in addition to analysis, which is equally time consuming.

The interview process started with the introduction of the research project. I explained the purpose of the research as required and the respondents signed the participant information sheet, which I had given them prior to the interview date (appendix ii). I also provided and explained the participant consent form (appendix iii) which they also signed after understanding their role and rights. This then was followed by the interview which I audio-recorded.

Semi-structured questions in IPA present the challenge of the interview moving away from the set questions into a wider scope. While I started the interview with the guiding question, the interview moved eventually into more unstructured dialogue and, as Eatough and Smith (2011) note, that posed the challenge of control, as many respondents seemed to have much to say. Doing this type of interview, as Kumar (2014) claims, required high communication skills to be able to navigate between the prepared question guides and the unanticipated directions taken by the respondents. Most respondents seemed excited to share their stories and sometimes painful memories, making it important to sensitively control the direction of the interview.

3.10. Data Analysis

The work of unravelling the meanings found in the raw data involved intense interpretative skills and engagement with the transcripts. It was guided by the research questions that the empirical data was intended to address. In qualitative research, one can analyse data using either contents, discourse, narrative or event analysis, among other approaches. I have chosen to analyse my raw data manually,

through content analysis, because my research interest in the information collected from the in-depth interviews is the content, as a basis for my further reflection. I wanted to understand what issues were influencing decisions about church affiliation. Content analysis involves understanding and interpreting information that has been collected from field research, or from different texts, identifying relationships between words and concepts that may give meaning to the information. Kumar defines content analysis as ‘a means of analysing contents of interviews or observational field notes in order to identify the main themes that emerge from the responses given by respondents or the observation notes made by the researcher’ (2014, p.318).

This process was done through first making verbatim transcriptions of the six interviews from the audio-recorded data, which I did myself. This enabled me to interact deeply with the transcripts allowing better understanding and familiarity with the material. I also read the data several times to make sure I captured all that the participants said and related it to the observation I noted during the interviews. In the process, I was able to identify concepts and categories that formed the basic units of my analysis (Willig, 2008). I then coded my transcriptions using *in vivo* coding, also known as verbatim coding, which refers to ‘a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data’ (Saldana, 2009, pg.74). I used different colours to code a word, a short phrase or a sentence/s out of the respondent’s own words that I felt was important in addressing the main research question. *In vivo* coding is useful in capturing the exact words of the respondent, and is in line with qualitative research that seeks to understand a phenomenon from the participants’ point of view. A sample of a coded interview transcript is attached (appendix iv). By use of interpretative phenomenological analysis, themes that run across the individual interviews were identified. Through coding, categorization and analytic reflection of the data (Saldana, 2009) themes were further categorized into major (super-ordinate) and minor (sub-ordinate) components (Hale et al., 2007). Further clustering was done to show where minor themes clustered under the major themes, and this finally led to the generation of the empirical research findings as recorded in chapter four. Interpretation was done within the practical

theology theoretical framework. This involved my sense-making of the participants' sense-making of their changes in religious affiliations and the response of the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, a process referred to as double hermeneutics by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012). The interpretation generated formed the basis of discussion in chapters five and six. They reflect the social, religious and economic factors that affect the behaviour of contemporary Christian in Kenya and, in effect, trigger the affiliation changes.

3.11. Conclusion

The whole research design chosen to carry out this research contributed immensely to the success of the study. The nature of data required determines the approach a research takes. My purpose was to study the changes in religious affiliation in Nyambene Synod in relation to Pentecostalism and what those changes mean to the Methodist Church. This purpose was achieved by use of a qualitative approach that enabled the investigation of the interaction between Pentecostalism and Methodism through an empirical study and review of literature. This research required deep and rich qualitative data, to provide rich interpretations of the phenomenon. Participants were picked through purposive sampling, and provided essential data from their own understanding of the phenomenon, which in turn helped to illuminate substantial factors in changes of religious affiliations.

By making use of IPA, the study allowed deep interaction with the participants where they were free to identify and discuss issues they considered important. Use of interpretative skills helped to get an even deeper interpretation from the participants' meaning-making of the phenomena. Furthermore, the use of IPA contributed to the generation of authentic data particularly because interviews used an open-ended semi-structured format that was less restrictive to the participants. This revealed novel areas that were not anticipated and contributed to the richness and reliability of data.

Data collected was manually analysed and, using in vivo coding, I was able to identify themes that formed the basis of research findings. Further analysis was done through content analysis and this generated interpretative theological issues

pertaining to religious changes and their effects on MCK. Ethical requirements were observed and challenges encountered did not hamper the success of the research. Finally, the research is considered worthwhile because it provides validation and development of assumptions about changes in religious affiliations in relation to Pentecostalism in Nyambene Synod, which have been hitherto unexplored. As such, the empirical research design will enable the findings to inform the Methodist Church in its practice in the Synod and beyond. The next chapter reports the first level of the interpretative findings of this research, describing key issues from the interviews with participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

FACTORS AFFECTING RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS AND THEIR IMPACTS ON THE METHODIST CHURCH IN NYAMBENE SYNOD

4.0. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present findings that have emerged from qualitative research done in the months of July and August 2019. The study was conducted in Nyambene Synod of The Methodist Church in Kenya. The purpose of the study is to explore the changing religious affiliations experienced in Nyambene and their impact on The Methodist Church in the Synod. Therefore, I endeavoured to find out the perceptions, feelings and interpretations of participants about this phenomenon in which people move from one church or denomination to another. Participants were drawn from across the Synod using purposive sampling so that I could listen to those whose experience was considered appropriate for providing the best information to achieve the objectives of the study. The Meru tribe occupies Nyambene Synod so respondents already share the same language, culture and social environment. This research makes use of a qualitative research methodology with an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design. My findings are therefore analysed using this design.

Six participants with an experience of Methodist and Pentecostal churches through either membership or association were deliberately picked for interview. I conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews focusing on how movement between these churches occurs, who are involved, what determines the movement and how this affects The Methodist Church in Kenya, Nyambene Synod. For the purpose of anonymity of the respondents, their real names are concealed in this report, and instead, I used the following codes to identify the six interviewees: IP01, IP02, IP03, IP04, IP05, and IP06. They will be acknowledged where their information is used by using the Harvard referencing style that is recommended by the Anglia Ruskin University. I will use the words ‘participant’, ‘interviewee’ and ‘respondent’ interchangeably, and the terms ‘pastor’ and ‘minister’ will also be

interchanged. Other interchangeable terms are ‘mainline’, ‘mission’ and ‘traditional mission’ churches used to refer to the churches that were started by missionaries, including the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), the Roman Catholic Church, and The Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK) among others.

Short participants’ portraits given below are useful for deeper understanding and interpretation of the research findings. I will use this portraiture, which is a detailed description of the human experience, as a tool to deepen my analysis. Portraiture allows identification and documentation of contradictions, which are quite common in human social relationships, by gathering specific and small facts (Lightfoot, 2005). According to Lightfoot, a portraitist uses these contradictions to uncover a different pathway to shared experience rather than the well-known route of generalisation, moving from the specific to universal. By contrast, ‘the portraitist seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place, hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it, trusting that the readers will feel identified’ (2005, p. 13). The portraitist therefore puts more emphasis on single cases and Lightfoot argues that attention to small details make it clear, specific and contextual, allow readers from other contexts to resonate with shared themes in it.

Participant IP01 is a 39-year-old Methodist member who has risen in the hierarchy of leadership roles in the church from youth leader to church secretary, church chairperson and circuit steward. He has experience of Pentecostal churches because during his time in leadership in Methodism, he has witnessed relatives, friends and fellow church members leave the Methodist church to join Pentecostal churches. Some of those who left started their own churches that are growing steadily. His further exposure comes from his regular invitations to the Pentecostal churches when they have events. Participant IP01 interacts quite closely with Pentecostal members in social and family events.

The second participant IP02 has moved to a Methodist church from a Pentecostal church where he had stayed for fifteen years having moved there from an Anglican

Church. He is 37 years old, was born and raised in the Anglican Church up to 18 years old, then moved to a Pentecostal church after feeling that the Anglican Church was very rigid. He has been in a Methodist church for four years, and participates comfortably in youth programmes and men's fellowship where he feels happy to exercise the skills he acquired through his study for a diploma in leadership. He has started pursuing the process of becoming a preacher in the Methodist Church. This participant has experience of both traditional mission churches and Pentecostal churches by having been a member of both.

Respondent IP03 is a 29-year-old Pentecostal church member who left the Methodist Church in 2016 at the age of 26. He joined a Pentecostal church where he is a 'music minister', as he calls it, for which he is paid. He grew up in the Methodist Church, finished his college education and got married as a Methodist. He felt he did not get the support he desperately needed from his Methodist Church during his wedding preparations. With the addition of frustrations encountered in his attempt to exercise his music skills, he moved to a Pentecostal church.

Participant IP04 is a 45-year-old Pentecostal pastor and primary school teacher with a degree in education. He was born and raised in the Methodist church, he completed his studies and married while in the Methodist Church, and progressed through roles of leadership from Sunday school teacher to youth leader, church secretary, circuit youth leader and synod youth organising secretary. He is passionate about young people and tried to bring changes he thought would benefit the youth spiritually, but met resistance from church leaders who stuck to traditional liturgy and the Church's Standing Orders. He resigned from all his leadership positions, and his minister then called a leaders' meeting and 'excommunicated' him: a practice commonly referred to in MCK as 'being put under discipline'. He left the Methodist Church in 2006 and started his own church which now has five other churches they call branches. He says he left for spiritual reasons, not personal reasons, and attributes his success and leadership growth to the foundation he acquired from the Methodist Church.

The respondent IP05 is a 42-year-old Pentecostal church member. He was born and grew up in the Methodist Church until he completed secondary school education. He left the Methodist Church after desperately looking for the minister to share his personal challenging issues and feeling disappointed. When the minister finally visited their church, he took issue with him and embarrassed him publicly in the church. In addition, as a youth leader in the Methodist Church, he encountered a lot of resistance and disagreement with leaders about issues affecting the youth including the way they worship. He was accused of misleading the youth, and eventually left.

Respondent IP06 is a 23-year-old Methodist member from birth. He left the Methodist Church, joined a Pentecostal church for two years, and then went back to the Methodist Church in 2019. Before leaving, he was a youth chairperson but was frustrated by leaders who in his opinion did not listen to him or show any interest in the youth. He interacts closely with Pentecostal church adherents who are his peers and he attends spiritual events in Pentecostal churches such as revival meetings, crusades and overnight prayer meetings that are not found in his Methodist church.

Despite the near homogeneity in the narratives of their experience, respondents gave varied stories concerning their experience and understanding of Methodist and Pentecostal churches, and offered different interpretations of the changes taking place. It was evident from their responses that a movement of Christians is taking place between churches in the Nyambene Synod. All respondents, regardless of the church with which they affiliate, acknowledge that the prevailing trend is from MCK and other traditional mission churches to Pentecostal churches and movements. However, it was revealed by participant IP02, who grew up as an Anglican, moved to a Pentecostal church and is now a Methodist, that there is another trend which is present though not clearly conspicuous. 'They don't just move to one church, many move to many churches because they have that hunger and desire that they do not know how to address' (2019, p.7). This is an indication that there are people who just move from church to church trying to satisfy an urge they may not clearly understand. Clarifying what is driving these urges and

movements is one of the central questions of my research. There is a complexity about the movement between churches, which raises the question whether every movement has conscious achievable goals or is a mere desire to experience something different.

The movement mostly involves the youth – ‘most of the people that move are the youth’ (IP01, 2019, p.1) – although respondents IP01 and IP05 are keen to note that old people also move for reasons that are slightly different from those identified as key to the youth. In addition, these movements of the old people do not cause any alarm to church leaders because they are considered minimal and normal, and neither do I intend to pursue this here as it is outside the scope of this research. Emerging themes from the data helped me to identify factors that participants perceive to influence movements. These factors, which I explore below, are worship, teachings/preaching, church structures, systems and procedures, church governance, identification and employment of talents, pastor-believer relationship, friction and misunderstandings in the church, and evangelism and publicity. These factors have affected the Methodist Church and respondents identified the impacts discussed in the second part of this chapter as retarded growth, flexibility, animosity and unhealthy competition and lack of reliable spiritual guidance.

4.1. Worship

The theme of worship featured in all the six participants’ interviews, though each described it with a different emphasis and perspective depending on the church they were describing. The commonality of this theme draws attention to the centrality of worship for Christians in Nyambene regardless of their denomination. It appears that participants talk of worship when they are referring to activities involved in a normal Sunday service. These include, but are not limited to, praying, singing, preaching, giving offerings, and the teaching of the word of God. These are components of Sunday services found in most churches. What seems to attract attention is the way it is done: the freedom involved, the time given to it and the impact it has on worshippers. Indeed, the two denominations are perceived to present two different modes of worship, with the traditional mission churches

having liturgical worship and the Pentecostal churches having a ‘free style’ worship. Free style worship here is understood to mean freedom from liturgical guidelines and restrictions found in mainline churches. It allows room to exercise spiritual gifts without the restriction of adherence to a written programme. Worship appears to be central to all respondents who identified it as a key factor that affects the current trends. Below I present their views on Methodist and Pentecostal worship separately.

4.1.1. Worship in the Methodist Church

The six interviewees were overwhelmingly negative in their discussion of worship in the Methodist Church. They expressed dissatisfaction and contrasted it with Pentecostal worship, suggesting that the Methodist Church missed some desirable attributes found in the Pentecostal churches. To distinguish between Methodist and Pentecostal worship, I will use Methodist worship to refer to the liturgical style of worship where ritual, organization, order and procedure of the Sunday service is observed. This liturgy is usually written in a worship book that includes hymns, psalms, and prayers, and reference is made to a lectionary that provides Sunday or daily Bible readings for a whole year or quarter. Most traditional mission churches observe this as a foundational organisation of church worship inherited from the missionaries, which has been followed faithfully to date without much alteration.

Participants describe Methodist worship as systematic and programmed, which to them is a hindrance to free-style Pentecostal worship. IP01, a Methodist Church leader, contends that ‘the way church is programmed in the Methodist setup...will not allow the people to be attended on the issues they have at hand’ (IP01, 2019, p.1). He acknowledges that the system is rigid leaving no freedom for unplanned matters that may arise in the daily lives of Christians that he feels need to be addressed in the church. This sentiment, coming from a leader, who has served as a church chairperson, reveals the general perception of the authority of liturgy in Methodist worship.

Liturgical worship is perceived to have strong controls over the Sunday service and is seen to curtail freedom of worship, as respondent IP04 contends: ‘it has a

number of elements which kind of puts a person under checks in terms of what we are calling worship' (IP04, 2019, p.4). A traditional mission church that uses written liturgy for services will always be systematic as every step is clearly spelled out in the worship book. Therefore, worshippers follow this order and sing hymns from the hymnbook and at times read prayers from the book. These could be the limits that participant IP04 is citing, and they have increasingly caused dissatisfaction among worshippers. Strict adherence to liturgy is perceived to have denied mainline Christians freedom of expression in worship and manifestations of their gifts.

Respondents understand this kind of worship as devoid of the Holy Spirit. For them, the Holy Spirit is attributed with prompting spontaneity in prayers, singing, and enthusiastic sermons that speak directly to people's situations. By contrast, respondents claim that the Methodist's use of lectionary assumes that the circumstances of Christians will be the same everywhere and at all times, so that those readings will make sense to everyone regardless of their local situation.

...that is what I heard the theme of the message at a certain service is supposed to regulate all over the world, the same message. ...maybe the Holy Spirit of God would want people to be preached different things. (IP05, 2019, p.3)

The perceived absence of the Spirit's leading in worship is taken to imply a more abstract view of God, who is not related to real life in the way that is strongly desired. Consequently, leaders in MCK are seen not to have the Holy Spirit and are even thought to disregard spiritual manifestations. IP03 puts it thus '...but here in Methodist even if the Holy Spirit has taken over, it does not matter' (2019, p.8). The presence and work of the Holy Spirit has been a contentious issue in Kenyan religious life, with the Pentecostal churches accusing mainline/mission churches of 'lacking' the Holy Spirit. Participants in my study illustrate this, as they perceive leaders in MCK as lacking the Holy Spirit, even suggesting that they hinder others from experiencing the Spirit. Respondent IP05, who left the Methodist Church, feels 'the problem could be partly with the leaders themselves...those senior people most of the times they put a lot of barriers to the service' (2019, p.5). Participants

understand this as a discouragement of the experience and manifestation of spiritual gifts. As IP05 claimed bluntly, 'The Holy Spirit was not allowed' (2019, p. 4).

Methodist worship is thus described as so predictable that it is no longer exciting because one knows the readings early before going to church and the programme followed every Sunday has become a monotonous routine: 'everything is even predicted, the next Sunday we will read and we will sing these hymns. It's like now we can even do the next Sunday on a Monday because of course we know what is going to happen' (IP03, 2019, p.10). This predictability, combined with the lack of vigorous worship make services boring, in the opinion of respondents. The predictability of liturgical worship is experienced by many as monotony, which can in turn produce lethargy. Even if people do not leave the Methodist Church for another denomination, the lack of excitement about Methodist services can lead them to infrequent attendance.

Spiritual experience is accelerated by music in Pentecostal churches, which brings about emotional excitement in addition to being entertaining. In MCK, youth get dissatisfied because this kind of freedom is restricted. IP01 says, 'Most of the youth feel that they are not given an opportunity to worship or to sing because they like singing' (2019, p.1). Quality, youth-friendly music, which mostly refers to contemporary Christian music, and the use of modern instruments, is a component of worship that is not highly developed in the Methodist Church, Nyambene Synod to meet the desires of the youth. A young participant, IP03, who is in charge of music in a Pentecostal church, narrated his encounter with Methodist youths:

In the last six or five months, I received almost four youths from here, [pointing at the Methodist church outside the interview room] this church to my church...they tell me that before we go to our church, we pass here we get experience of your music...because we don't have such music in our church (IP03, 2019, p.6).

This is an indication that lack of modern music and equipment in the Methodist churches drives young people to seek satisfaction elsewhere in Pentecostal churches. The church referred to above is the largest single congregation and the best in Nyambene Synod in terms of music, flexibility and use of modern technology and equipment. Yet it is losing its young people to the Pentecostal

churches. Most of the Methodist churches in the Synod are yet to update their music. For some, investing in modern music and instruments has not been a priority while others are not able. Participants see the Methodist Church as lacking in the vigour that is experienced in Pentecostal churches; ‘worship is also inclined towards the old people...there is no that vigorous worship and praise,’ as IP01, a Methodist member and leader says (2019, p.1).

Another issue noted by my interviewees was that time given to different components of worship in the Methodist Church is inadequate. Participants feel that very little time is given to preaching of the word, praying, and singing (mostly choruses of worship and praise): ‘I think the Methodist church is giving more time to the things that we have at hand, rather than focusing actually on God, worshipping, praying...’ (IP06, 2019, p.3). The ‘things we have at hand’ here refer to issues like collecting money in church for various needs like a sick member, selling items to raise money for maybe paying the church share required by the circuit, the church secretary taking so long to read (and explain) announcements, and other activities which do not look essential to the participants. ‘...sometimes selling things in church, taking over two hours, we have discussing issues, people taking a lot of time and you realise now...the time we are giving the word of God is about 15 to 20 minutes’ (IP06, 2019, p.3). Those who remain in the MCK feel that time for preaching, singing and praying in Methodist services should be increased. IP02 wonders why sermons take less time than a normal class lesson in our schools.

The session for prayer, session for praise, the time we spend preaching the word, must also be increased so that we are able to teach. If a lesson in school lasts for forty minutes, our sermons cannot last for thirty minutes. (IP02 2019, p.9)

The level of spiritual fervour among Methodists is another component considered to be lower than that evident in the Pentecostal churches. Methodist worship is therefore often called ‘cold’ worship because it lacks vigour, spontaneity, and long moments of personal prayers with outbursts of speaking in tongues, dancing, and miraculous experiences. Young people encounter high-level spiritual experiences in colleges and schools that are dominated by Pentecostal preachers regardless of

their church affiliation, but they do not experience the same when they come back to their churches:

you go to school you realise there is a difference because the people in schools, their spiritual levels are very high... and find there are people praying for over two hours, one hour and you feel like I might be very far from the reality (IP02, 2019, p.2).

They try to bring that kind of experience back to their churches but they meet resistance from the leaders. The experience of IP06, a 23-year-old participant, who left the Methodist church for two years and came back in 2019, demonstrates this. He keeps on attending Pentecostal preaching and revival gatherings organised by the Pentecostal churches in search of this experience. He says that most of those youths who leave the Methodist Church start by going and coming back, but finally decide to stay in the Pentecostal churches.

most of the young people are growing and they go to learning institutions they find new things, which the church is not ready to absorb. So they end up going to other churches whereby those things they see in their schools are found. (IP06, 2019, p.2)

This search for higher spiritual fulfilment and a desire to meet the spiritual levels of their peers is understood to drive the youth from mission churches.

Before moving on to consider what respondents said about Pentecostal worship, it is important to note that one respondent did acknowledge positive elements in Methodist worship. IP02 referenced attractive attributes in Methodist worship that contributed to his decision to join the Methodist Church despite the challenges noted above. He says that he felt he needed a more organised and systematic way of worship away from the theatrical way of worship in Pentecostal churches. There are aspects of worship in MCK that are attractive to him now, although at his younger age he disliked it. It seems also that there are practices in the Pentecostal church of which he does not approve, particularly the suspected dishonest 'drama', as he calls it:

I think I had seen all the drama that there was to see in the Pentecost churches...I have seen that people actually move when they are past their youth because they want less of the drama. They just want a place where they can worship quietly' (IP02, 2019, p.6).

This reveals a possibility of another low volume trend of mature people moving back to Methodist and other traditional mission churches. The vigour and emotions that attract young people get less pivotal as one advances in age and matures in faith. As my interviewee says, ‘when people have matured, they are able to make responsible decision’ (2019, p.6). This indeed raises the challenge of integrating the old and young Christians in worship without one group feeling oppressed or ignored, to provide an environment that can accommodate all age groups and meet their divergent spiritual needs.

4.1.2. Worship in the Pentecostal Churches

Worship in the Pentecostal churches was described mainly in comparison with that of the Methodist church. I now consider Pentecostal worship as practiced, experienced and perceived by participants. The six research participants spoke predominantly positively concerning worship in Pentecostal churches, with just a few instances of negative comments. Pentecostal worship is normally characterised by highly energised loud singing and clapping of hands with spontaneous bursts of praises and tongues, enthusiastic topical sermons from highly charismatic young preachers, long moments of both communal and personal prayer, occasional prophetic declarations, and moments of ecstasy. Pentecostal Sunday services take longer than those in Methodist churches, their programme is relatively flexible and most of their services do not follow a written liturgy allowing an environment of ‘freedom’. Most of their worshippers are youthful with a smaller number of middle-aged members. Below are some of the attributes that respondents have pointed out about Pentecostal worship.

Respondents described Pentecostal worship as lively and exciting, unlike the quiet and ‘boring’ Methodist worship. They noted that many worshippers from different denominations enjoy the kind of exciting environment that appeals to emotions. ‘People may move because the experience in Pentecostal movement generally, without putting regard to the element of salvation or no salvation, is more exciting because of unrestricted mode of worship’ (IP04, 2019, p.2). To heighten this experience of exciting worship, Pentecostal churches invest heavily in high quality,

modern and youth-friendly music. The desired experience is accelerated by music that brings about emotional excitement in addition to being entertaining. The power of music attracts both churched and non-churched people who generally derive joy from it, especially when the tunes are familiar and local. Church music is claimed to have a supernatural, powerful, and irresistible pull that can be transformative:

There is that power of music that can transform, like me I got born again because of music. I heard the sound of music and I got born again. Just that. So these people because they love music, it is that supernatural thing that attracted them' (IP03, 2019, p.8).

Pentecostal worship favours spontaneity where natural expressions are allowed to flow freely unlike Methodist worship, which is programmed and restricted. Respondents tended to feel there is more freedom of worship in the Pentecostal churches than in MCK because of the open, natural and uninhibited movements and outbursts (IP04, 2019, p. 2). For example, IP04, a pastor in the Pentecostal church, says that in praying the worshipper is left to express his or her own needs and feelings to God. Prayer is

Slightly guided and mostly left to the worshiper to express himself to God... allow the intercessor now who is the believer to intercede as the prompting of the spirit of God. I think that is what I would call spiritual experience' (IP04, 2019, p.1).

Pentecostal churches appear to attach a lot of importance to personal worship, which therefore opens up space for their worshippers to speak to God in whichever form they feel comfortable. In this case, spontaneity is *personal* spontaneity; allowing individual worshippers to encounter God in their own way, own words, at their own 'stage', rather than being 'forced into' the communal experience of liturgy. Spontaneity however does not mean a disorderly kind of worship; rather it is allowed at some point in the service and is controlled to give room to other elements of worship 'They are doing it on their own though they are guided and within a framework of programme' (IP04, 2019, p. 1).

Related to spontaneity is the recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in worship. Spiritual gifts and their expression are highly valued in the Pentecostal church. Pentecostal participants in my interviews tended to appreciate space given to the Holy Spirit in worship, characterised by spontaneous prayers, speaking in

tongues, singing, dancing and miraculous happenings such as prophesying and healing. Because Methodist and other mainline Churches' worship does not include space for such unconstrained activities, Pentecostal church leaders often accuse mainline/mission churches of 'lacking' the Holy Spirit. IP03 says allowing the Spirit to flow freely is what makes the service vibrant: 'the service is so lively there because sometimes you can hear somebody saying the Holy Spirit took over. And when the Holy Spirit takes over sometimes it is not easy to do the formula that you are used to doing' (2019, p.8). Thus, spontaneity is here being portrayed as a product of the Holy Spirit while 'the formula' lacks the Holy Spirit.

Unpredictability is another aspect of Pentecostal worship that respondents appreciate as opposed to the predictable system of worship in the mainline churches that use the liturgy and lectionary. In Pentecostal churches, there are no set readings or hymns. The preacher is at liberty to choose a reading to use each Sunday so the message or theme of the sermon is only privy to the preacher before it is delivered to the congregation. Congregants have no prior knowledge about the readings and the message is presented as a direct word from God through the pastor. This convinces congregants that such messages come from God, especially due to this unpredictability: 'you cannot predict because the man of God, pastor or priest of that altar, he speaks to God and asks God, "what am I going to tell the people? what is the word of the season?"'. (IP03, 2019, p.10)

This highlights another aspect of Pentecostalism that is missing in the Methodist Church, and which seems to attract the attention of participants of both denominations. Pentecostal worship is perceived as issue-based where topical sermons address the issues facing members at that moment. Due to its flexibility, Pentecostal services are able to address issues affecting their adherents as they arise, and in turn, this indicates that the pastor and leaders are in touch with the worshippers' daily experiences. This increases the feeling that worship is relevant, since it provides solutions to questions asked and is able to provide an environment in which God is perceived to interact with human reality closely. A Pentecostal respondent IP03, who left the Methodist Church three years ago, calls it 'the word of the season' (2019, p.10) and argues that this word is not found in

the Methodist Church. Respondent IP01 also points to the lack of the ‘word of the season’ as a negative aspect of Methodist worship. In essence, they are saying that the flexibility of Pentecostal churches allows the church to address issues of importance to their members, at the point at which they reach the pastor’s attention: ‘the Pentecostal setup, when an issue arises, it can be addressed through the preaching. Because they don’t have such programmed teachings...’ (IP01, 2019, p.3).

Pentecostal worship is perceived as flexible in all its practices as opposed to the systems and procedures followed in Methodist and other mainline churches. The characteristics of spontaneity, issue-based sermons, and unpredictability all indicate a flexible system that is determined to an extent by the person leading the service and the preacher. In most cases, preachers in Pentecostal churches are the pastors of the church, who also decide how a service should run and what topics need to be taught/preached:

For example if you want people to be more in prayer life, you would concentrate on teaching about prayer, you can even get preachers from other churches, who maybe are able to teach these things among the people that you see the change that you desire (IP04, 2019, p.2).

It is important to note that being flexible here does not necessarily mean disorder, but rather refers to being in control of what happens rather than feeling obliged to follow a predetermined system.

Alongside these positive attributes of Pentecostal worship, I notice that two participants who have been members of Pentecostal churches referred to a couple of negative aspects of Pentecostal worship. IP02, who was a member for about fifteen years, says people are enticed to the Pentecostal church by ‘perceived enhanced spirituality...random prophecies, speaking in tongues and services that are just spontaneous. They don’t have a clear organization’ (IP02, 2019, p. 4). The use of “perceived” indicates a sense of uncertainty for this respondent: Pentecostal worship may appear to demonstrate enhanced spiritual standards, but they are not so certain this is the reality. However, these Pentecostal worship expressions seem

to attract the young who have the energy and who are searching for spiritual fulfilment and excitement in the Pentecostal way.

A second criticism is the existence of fake Pentecostal churches and pastors who even manufacture miracles to impress their followers. This comes from IP06's experience as he moved from one Pentecostal church to another before returning to the Methodist Church. He sounds a warning that there is need to be aware of the existence of such churches and pastors:

Some have made their own methodologies, their own inventories, and they call them Holy Spirit still. So there is the exaggerated part of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal churches that we need also to be aware of...fake people performing miracles which are not there (IP06, 2019. p.8).

This brings into question the genuineness of some of the practices in Pentecostal churches. The integrity of such churches is increasingly being questioned especially since many people fall victims of these fake pastors and sometimes suffer emotional and physical exploitation under their hands. One Pastor, 'Kanyari, son of a disgraced prophetess Lucy Nduta, who was jailed for two years over fraud after she was exposed by the Sunday Nation faking healings, also admitted that he had coached some members of his church to give false testimonies and make fake phone calls on his radio programmes to dupe listeners' (City Girl, 2014). This could be one of the factors that has contributed to the reverse trend noted earlier back to the Methodist Church and other mainline churches.

4.1.3. Observations

From the above discussion of the participants' expressions, several observations come to the fore. First, worship emerges as one of the factors affecting churchgoers in both Methodist and Pentecostal traditions, and every participant is interested in the nature of worship in which they are involved. However, worship as practiced in the Methodist Church raises concerns for all respondents, most of whom initially belonged to Methodist churches before moving to Pentecostal churches and movements. Methodist worship is liturgical and is portrayed as dull or boring, rigid and restrictive, out of touch with reality, irrelevant, institution-focused instead of people-centred, and not future-sensitive but past-preservative. Further, there is a

lack of felt relevance to the worshippers' context. Methodist respondents pointed out that this is a key difference between the two denominations. They indicated of a desire, for example, that the preaching of the word of God should address issues facing the people. Instead, Methodist worshippers feel that the messages they receive are not sufficiently focused on their needs but rather on the uniformity and faithful adherence to programme: 'we were told that the service which is getting preached at Mombasa is the same service which is supposed to be preached at Thamare' (IP05, 2019, p.3). This focus on worshippers' life experience and context is ignored.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that participants who are still in the Methodist Church express a desire for change so that they can participate in more vibrant worship within their own churches. It is therefore interesting that while Methodist leaders are perceived to have fiercely defended their churches and systems and have not come out to challenge or initiate change in their way of worship, such change remains a felt need, and silence may not necessarily mean satisfaction. Evidently, a desire and clamour for change has been continuously ignored. Could it be because it is considered a Pentecostal practice, and therefore dismissed as inappropriate for the mainline churches? Could the mission church leaders still be assuming supremacy and dominance, to the extent that they do not see the challenge Pentecostalism presents to the future of their churches? Is it the system or the leaders that are not allowing change? Is this change necessary and if it is how far? These observed themes and questions are discussed further in chapter five under factors affecting church affiliation

4.2.0 Church Structures

Church structures here refer to the organization or arrangement of the different church elements and their relationships. This will involve how participants view and understand church organization, exercise of authority, traditions, autonomy and general administration processes. How do church structures, procedures and systems contribute to the movements and changes taking place in Nyambene synod? I present respondents' views below concerning both denominations.

4.2.1. The Methodist Church Structure, systems and procedures

The Methodist church has a clear structure that all members are expected to adhere to. It has a clear hierarchical organization beginning from the local congregation at the bottom, followed by circuits, then Synod and finally the conference at the top. These act as different levels of governance with the highest authority at the conference level and the congregations having the lowest impact in terms of power. Power flows from the conference, which is a body of top leaders under an elected presiding bishop, through synod bishops, superintendent ministers to congregations. A synod consists of a conglomeration of circuits while circuits are a group of congregations. MCK is connexional which means centralised; where all the units (congregations, circuits and synods) are organised, controlled and managed from one centre of power or under one authority (Conference) but with each unit exercising a limited degree of independence. Methodist ministers are stationed by the Conference Stationing Committee and work under Synod bishops who are representatives of the Conference. Similar to worship, five of the six participants criticised such structures in the Methodist Church, claiming that they hinder church growth, limit freedom of worship, hinder change and encourage traditions that are purportedly irrelevant.

The limited authority of local Methodist ministers is one of the areas where participants in the Pentecostal churches feel growth is hampered by structure. They feel that ministers are not given authority to make key decisions and implement them without having to take them to higher church officers for approval. A participant who left Methodism and started his own church compares the authority of a Methodist minister with that of a Pentecost church pastor. IP04 claims that a local Pentecostal congregation with a visionary pastor grows much faster than a local Methodist church because the Pentecostal pastor has more freedom to dream and implement dreams than a Methodist minister.

...the autonomy is so much checked; the government of Methodist is very systematic. You may not propagate an original idea very easily. You can't even come up with a vision even if it is so divine, and implement it at a personal level. It must go through systems and be accommodated. But in a Pentecostal movement,

a pastor of a local congregation is seen as the vision carrier of that local congregation (2019, p.5)

Church procedures are perceived to block change and the introduction of anything new. Churches and their ministers in MCK are not autonomous although this does not mean they do not have any freedom but it means their freedom is limited to an extent of fitting with others in the connexion. This means they follow similar procedures in services and management across the connexion. Rigid observance to these traditions and procedures (so participants claim) is a hindrance to anything new, no matter how good it may seem to members or how important it is at that particular time. Since the church follows procedures, those leading and preaching feel an obligation to be faithful to the structure and church procedures, consciously or unconsciously at the expense of members' needs. Methodist church leaders have resisted change and even fight it possibly for fear of losing their identity as a church. They criticise new ways of worship, and other new suggestions claiming they are not in the 'Standing Orders'¹⁴ which leaders followed faithfully. Others dismiss demands for change saying 'Methodists do not do that', 'that is not Methodism', or 'we are not Pentecostals'.

Strict observance of a traditional system of conducting church services and procedures therein is considered to hinder free worship. 'I tend to feel that maybe they found things that way and everybody is just following' (IP06 2019, p.7). Frustration is caused, even though there was some recognition by IP04 that not all changes – especially structural ones – can be accommodated '...because there is a change they realise is not easily accommodatable in the Methodist church' (2019, p.2). This compels some people to move.

It is evident that both Methodist and Pentecostal church participants have issues with the Methodist Church structures, systems and procedures. Their views demonstrate that strict adherence to these make it difficult for the church to grow spiritually, since worship is restricted, and new ideas are not accommodated.

¹⁴ Standing Orders are the official guidelines of the Methodist Church in Kenya containing laws, disciplines and procedures which are meant to assist in the effective and orderly governance of the church. It is a blend of history, doctrine, policy, ordinances and recommendations that have been agreed upon by the Conference.

Participants do not propose that these structures and systems are unnecessary but they suggest changes that they believe are within good Christian belief and practice:

It is always good for you to sustain a healthy church; you accommodate change which is not in contravention with the Bible or the key doctrine of the church. ...as long as there are changes which are moving with the modern trends and they may not be necessarily be in contravention with the scripture, or the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, it is necessary to accommodate them (IP04, 2019, p. 9)

On a positive note, one of my participants raised nothing negative about procedures but instead he appreciated them. Having been in Pentecostalism for fifteen years, he claimed the Methodist procedures and systems were part of his attraction to the church. He feels that structures make it easy for members' issues to be aired and addressed.

I wanted to identify with that church that has a structure...the structure of the church is very organised. There is a hierarchy that the chain of responsible people that we can always share our grievances, have our needs addressed. (IP02, 2019, p.12)

4.2.2. The Pentecostal church structures, systems and procedures

The Pentecostal church is seen as one where structure is of little importance as noted by the three Methodist participants and one Pentecostal member. Methodist members note it as a point of weakness while the Pentecost participant sees it as providing some advantages. IP02 says he left the church to join one that has a structure and adds that a Pentecostal church is run by an individual or a single family who in essence determine what happens in the church. '...the Pentecostal churches, I think are churches that are led by individuals – and they don't give themselves so much to structure and organization' (2019, p.3).

Lack of structure, as the Methodist Church participants see it, creates a kind of intentional disorganization and ignorance in the members such that they become spectators of the system and management. They cannot account for anything that happens and they do not claim any power or rights. This leaves the pastor as the centre of authority to determine the mode of operation of such establishments. 'The church is owned by a person and it's like everything we do, we do... at the end of it all its like it benefits an individual' (IP01, 2019, p.4). IP01 further claims that the

pastor can do whatever he wants with the church, and gave an example of one who sold the church building without informing his worshippers and joined another one. 'Members are forced to change to the tune of the pastor and to his will' (2019, p.4). This brings out a situation where the authority and autonomy of the pastor in Pentecostal churches deprives church members of their own rights and privileges making them vulnerable.

From his experience in the Pentecostal churches, IP06 feels there are Pentecostal churches that are not genuine and thinks that Methodist pastors are better placed to do the right thing despite the perceived restrictions of the Methodist structure and systems. 'And that's why I said Methodist is at a better position because they can balance things. It's in a better position to provide that spiritual guidance to people' (2019, p.7)

On a positive note, lack of structure enables Pentecostal churches to move with the times as current issues and desires of the congregation are addressed as they arise. Although Methodist respondents criticise lack of systems and structures in Pentecostal churches, they also paradoxically see it as a strength, since it allows the church to be flexible and sensitive to the context and social changes in the community. '...the Pentecostal setup, when an issue arises, it can be addressed through the preaching. Because they don't have such programmed teachings' (IP01, 2019, p.3). Their progressive mind-set, aided by lack of structure and the freedom it entails, has endeared the Pentecostal churches to the young generation that is particularly interested in new ventures. New ideas can easily be accommodated and propagated to allow the change desired by members in line with the vision of the pastor.

Another perceived benefit of the lack of structure in the Pentecostal churches is the freedom and authority of the pastor that allows him/her to grow their church without any restrictions. 'But in a Pentecostal movement, a pastor of a local congregation is seen as the vision carrier of that local congregation. If by chance he is a development minded person, he can go very far without being checked' (IP04, 2019, p.5). The pastor takes care of one congregation – unlike several, like in the

Methodist Church – and is able to initiate his own strategies to grow his church. IP04 says some of the pastors in the Pentecostal movement who are doing quite well came from the Methodist Church in the area, and yet the Methodist Church is not growing.

In our region a number of Pentecostal movements led by pastors and they are doing some good job, you may hear they say ‘I was also a Methodist’ but you might see a local Methodist church struggling for a number of years. It doesn’t grow, doesn’t do much development (2019, p.5)

It seems also that opportunities to use one’s gifts are opened up, whereas they are more likely to be closed out by structural requirements in mainline churches.

God may be calling you to be a singer, to be a preacher, to be another minister in another area of calling. And you feel the church you are in may not be opening that room, and it is not really the Bible which is barring that. It is maybe a system which is agreed by a certain Christian denomination (IP04, 2019, p.4).

The procedural requirements for one to be a minister or a preacher in the Methodist Church is a good example of where the system may close out gifted people, deeming them unqualified, due to failure to meet the laid down regulations. Pentecostal pastors, on the other hand, may not have gone through recognised theological training, but have nevertheless raised large congregations, challenging the theologically-trained mainline ministers.

It is however worth noting that this freedom can be used both positively and negatively. As IP04 notes, only those pastors who are gifted, who have integrity and are faithful to the calling will utilize the freedom to advance the work of God. Others, as pointed out earlier, might exploit members for their own selfish benefits. On the other hand, procedures and systems, when used appropriately, could be extremely useful for good management of churches and other institutions. Indeed, IP04, who is a Pentecostal pastor, admits that Pentecostal churches also have procedures, though they are not as strictly observed as in the Methodist Church. (IP04, 2019, p.5)

4.2.3. Observations

Strict observance of structures and procedures as found in the Methodist Church is blamed for not allowing freedom of worship, hindering beneficial change, and sticking to traditions and procedures that are no longer useful in the church. This is given as a reason for slow growth in the Methodist Church both spiritually and physically. The church has portrayed an inward-looking attitude that has resulted in a failure to live up to the expectations of its worshippers. The ‘we do not do that’ or ‘it’s not in the Standing Orders’ syndrome of Methodist leaders has blocked prospects of adjustments, denying voice and space to its members, who then leave the church out of frustration.

I would say that participants from Methodist churches still value procedures and systems more than the Pentecostal church respondents do, although MCK has been affected negatively by their rigid observance. Methodist church leaders are faced with hard questions that call for attention, including the importance of structure and systems in the church versus the challenge of change. Is change necessary? How would change affect the church and how far would it improve its relevance if executed? The church therefore is facing a challenge to revisit its stance as far as procedures are concerned, with a view to evaluating their practicability and possibly making some suitable adjustments. However, it is worth noting that the structures may not be as much of a problem as the church leaders and the worship leaders themselves, who often fail to be alert to changing social dynamics and do not work flexibly within the boundaries of the existing systems. By contrast, people who reject strict observance of rules and leave the Methodist Church for this reason often find space and a warm welcome within Pentecostal churches. Although Pentecostal pastors may seem to conform more to the desires of their congregations, they are able to maintain controls and make the situation work for their benefits.

4.3.0. Church Governance

This section will focus on how a church is organised and run. Here I will touch on issues of ownership, leadership, discipline, policies or rules and regulations and any other that would affect the running of a church. The Methodist Church is an organised institution with different levels of management and administration that

are clearly laid down and followed. It has also different levels of managers organised in a hierarchical order. On the other hand, the Pentecostal churches are mostly individual establishments that are managed according to the founders' purposes. There are no clear laid down structures and they can be a single congregation or a group of congregations that have grown from the initial branch. Interview participants have identified the management of these denominations as a contributing factor in the changes that are taking place in Nyambene Synod.

4.3.1. The Methodist Church Governance

The Methodist Church in Kenya has four levels of management with managers at each level having power over their area of jurisdiction but not independent of the upper levels. The lowest level of management is the congregation, which is led by a church chairperson assisted by the secretary and treasurer. There are other leaders for various groups and departments in the church like the youth group, women, men, children, and departments such as disability, education and others. The second level is the circuit made up of a group of congregations. It is led by a superintendent minister and has leaders representing similar groups to those at congregational level. Above circuits is the Synod led by a synod bishop who is elected by the conference. A group of circuits make a synod. Conference is the fourth level, led by the Presiding Bishop.

Leadership at all levels consists of equal numbers of ministers and lay leaders. That means both have equal voice in every decision of the church at managerial levels. At the congregational level, lay leaders and members have freedom to make decisions with the guidance of the minister. Congregations are thus led by their executive leaders who guide them on issues affecting them. Since a minister in MCK oversees many congregations, preaching is shared with lay preachers, the minister preaching occasionally. MCK is governed by a constitution called the Standing Orders that has been in use since the church obtained autonomy from the British Methodist Church in 1967.

Respondents from both the Methodist and Pentecostal churches recognise and commend the organisation in Methodist Church, but they also point out its

weaknesses. A Methodist respondent commends the MCK management in comparison to the Pentecostal churches that do not have such organization. 'It's an organization and everything we do, we do for the organization' (IP01, 2019, p.4). This organization attracts those who find it difficult in the Pentecostal churches set up. 'My movement from the Pentecostal Churches was because I wanted to work in a ministry or a church set up that is guided by principles and organization' (IP02, 2019, p.4). The democratic space found in MCK is a positive aspect where leaders are elected democratically and equal number of clergy to laity participate in the main decision-making bodies. Most decisions are reached by consensus among stakeholders: '...within the Methodist Church I think every voice is heard, issues are articulated and addressed' (IP02, 2019, p.4).

Despite the good management, participants claim that the organization puts strong controls that reduce the self-initiative and power of the pastor and other leaders.

Methodism has a very organised system of leadership, very organised very systematic and very professional and it really addresses spiritual issues and even other human virtues and things of leadership, and the likes. But as I said, the spirituality bit of Methodist, it has a number of elements which kind of puts a person under checks... (IP04, 2019, p.4).

This is supported by respondent IP06 who appreciates Methodist organization as a strength, but criticises the way leaders are elected: '...their management is good but the aspect of choosing leaders...' (IP06, 2019, p.8).

Leadership issues have been a point of discontentment in MCK despite the democratic intention of its structures and governance. Young people feel that the system has allowed and installed wrong people as leaders, and my respondents indicate they attribute the Methodist Church's loss of popularity to this. They claim that spiritual standards are compromised and so elected leaders may not help the church to grow spiritually: '...when we are almost doing an election, or we want to give some responsibilities in the church, we first of all consider not those who are spiritually mature or grownup but the ones that can support us financially' (IP06, 2019, p.8). These leaders are also blamed for adamantly resisting change and failing to listen to the youth. Their authoritative observance of church rules and regulations to the letter without considering their effectiveness has not gone down well with

church members. The quality of leaders seems to be the issue here, where respondents feel those elected are not able to deliver satisfactorily, especially on spiritual matters where they lack credibility: ‘...some people even if they have bad reputation in the village they will still be given a chance in the church just because they are financially stable’ (IP06, 2019, p.8).

Participants also blame a bureaucracy that hinders easy changes to the system to achieve desired results. New ideas or suggestions of any changes or adjustments, as IP04 claims, have to undergo different stages for approval. This seems to delay any activities, and sometimes approval may not come: ‘... the government of Methodist is very systematic...You can’t even come up with a vision even if it is so divine, and implement it at a personal level. It must go through systems and be accommodated’ (IP04, 2019, p.4). Unlike Pentecostal churches, where the local pastor could be the overall decision maker, MCK is democratic and follows procedures and processes laid down. It is a connexional church and some decisions are made at the highest governing body. Participants perceive this church organization as slowing down growth, change and at times promoting rules that may not benefit the members.

Frequent changes of ministers from one circuit to the other is seen to play a role in disorienting Christians who find it difficult to identify with their pastors since they are moved so often. Pentecostal participants said such ministers cannot have long-term dreams for their churches because they are not sure how long they can stay:

local congregations in Pentecostal movements which have got visionary pastors or leaders, they grow faster than local congregations in Methodist church which are under governance because the pastor will be sent there and it may not be very easy for that pastor to conceive a five year vision, a ten year vision because he may not tell where he may be tomorrow (IP04, 2019, p.5).

According to participants, frequent transfers are often aggravated by exploitation of the democratic space by church members/leaders who may sometimes influence the movement of ministers.

The issue of one minister in the Methodist Church taking care of many congregations makes it difficult to offer sufficient pastoral services to his/her

members. ‘Most of our pastors in the Methodist Church, they take care of many churches...Now if a pastor is taking care of ten churches, maybe it will take sometimes ten weeks before they visit a church’(IP01, 2019, p.1). This shows a serious underservice and as this participant expresses it, he is identifying a need that feels almost urgent. In the current life situations, it is unfair for a church to wait for ten weeks or more to see or receive services from their minister. Such Christians may suffer hunger for spiritual nourishment and may choose to get it elsewhere. The Methodist Church uses lay preachers to cover this gap and preach when the minister is not available, but it seems participants feel that services of a pastor/minister are on high demand.

4.3.2. The Pentecostal Church Governance

As mentioned above, most Pentecostal churches do not have a clear governance structure, as power is concentrated around the pastor and his family. Where there are assistant pastors, they operate under the senior pastor who in most cases is the founder/owner of the ministry. This system of management ensures that the pastor exercises control even if he/she delegates some responsibility to junior pastors. Older, classical Pentecostal churches do have a structure, but in this research, I concentrate on the Neo-Pentecostals that are the most recent and fastest growing in Nyambene synod. Respondents within the Methodist Church pointed out ownership of the churches by individual pastors and expressed dissatisfaction in the way these churches are managed. The following are areas of strength and weaknesses according to participants’ perception of the Pentecostal Church governance:

Leadership is seen as dictatorial where ‘divergent views are not so welcome. So that even people with revelations and better ideas on how ministry can be done are not very well accommodated’ as experienced by IP02 (2019, p.4). Loyalty to the senior pastor in this case is a key requirement for one to get any responsibility but if one shows interest of going higher, they are forced to leave.

So believers who want to grow to that platform of a service and, coming out in the open to serve God without fear are not really accorded that chance. And if they rise they are seen as competition most of them end up being expelled from those churches (IP02, 2019, p.10).

This kind of oppression for those who are seen as a threat could be responsible for the splits that take place in the Pentecostal churches where those who wish to rise to a senior pastor position may choose to start their own ministries.

Another claimed weakness of Pentecostal churches is that there is little or no accountability of finances and other resources: ‘...the challenges of Pentecostal churches is the management is done by individuals or maybe two or three people. All the givings that you give in a Pentecostal church, you are not sure of what they are going to do’ (IP06, 2019, p.4). This kind of management that is centralized under one person does not cultivate accountability since members are deliberately kept under control and high level of loyalty is required particularly for those who may get any leadership responsibilities. ‘I feel that those leaders in the Pentecostal churches must give themselves to accountability and scrutiny because when they run churches these are public organizations’ (IP02, 2019, p.11). This does not happen and yet most Pentecostal church members remain loyal while others are still attracted to those churches. This shows that their attractions are on other issues found within Pentecostal churches rather than governance. This free-style management seems to have its strengths that (judging from the growth and expansion of Pentecostal churches) could be overshadowing its weaknesses.

The Pentecostal governance system allows flexibility unlike the Methodist system that is perceived as rigid. Pentecostal churches have the freedom to make programs dictated by the prevailing circumstances and needs. That is why respondents from both Methodist and Pentecostal churches claim that Pentecostal churches are able to address issues as they arise: ‘the Pentecostal setup, when an issue arises, it can be addressed through the preaching’ (IP01, 2019, p.3). Pastors visit members who are in need of prayers immediately since they do not have programmed pastoral visits like Methodist ministers. Theirs appear to be need-based and not program-dictated: ‘...they visit each and every time that the people have the needs for prayers’ (IP01, 2019, p.1). Respondents also emphasise that people go to church because they believe their needs whether spiritual or physical would be met as well as hearing God speak over their life situations through his servants. ‘Some go to churches because they need to have their needs met or the men of God speaking

over their lives' (IP02, 2019, p.4). Understanding this desire, Pentecostal pastors make use of their free-style management to address it and this satisfies their followers.

Lack of bureaucratic processes to be followed in introducing any change or something new allows the Pentecostal pastors and leaders to provide what they feel their members need, especially the youth who form majority of their congregation. Since the pastor is the sole decision maker he can introduce and even spend money on changes that he feels are beneficial to the progress of his church. Youth friendly programs such as use of modern music instruments are put in place in response to the needs of these youthful congregations. Those gifted in music are a precious gem in churches that are growing and Pentecostal pastors seize such opportunity to grow their congregations. 'Pastor is encouraging me...exposing me to music industry, pastor is taking me to these concerts...he pays my transport' (IP03, 2019, p.4).

Due to the individual ownership of most of the upcoming Pentecostal churches, there is little or no transfer of pastors: 'Let me even say he is not transferable' (IP04, 2019, p.6). In most cases, one pastor takes care of one church only, and he/she could have other assistant pastors serving the same church depending on the size of the congregation and the need assessment by the senior pastor. '...most of our pastors in the Methodist Church, they take care of many churches unlike the Pentecostal churches whereby they have one church' (IP01, 2019, p.2). Pentecostal Christians have the pastor close to them and they are assured of his/her presence throughout their life – unlike a Methodist. The Pastor-believer relationship is strong in the Pentecostal churches because the pastor is not transferable and this is seen to be very important for the believers: '...there is a very strong attachment to the spiritual authority who will walk with you the journey of your faith. He will meet your spiritual needs...social needs...development needs, attend to your family...' (IP04, 2019, p.6).

4.3.3. Observations

The theme of church governance raises pertinent issues for both Methodist and Pentecostal churches. Respondents from both denominations noted and

commended the organisation of the Methodist Church where its system of government make the church democratic, orderly, predictable, and accountable. These constitute its distinctive characteristics and identity, making MCK different from the Pentecostal churches. These governance structures could be responsible for intact survival of the church while church schisms are a common occurrence in other denominations. On the other hand, they criticise the system for its rigidity and bureaucracy, claiming that these hinder change and progress in the church. Its inability to accommodate and address current issues satisfactorily makes MCK lose out to the youthful enthusiastic Pentecostal churches. The attitude of Methodist leaders, sticking adamantly to its regulations and traditional practices that may not be useful to modern day worshippers, hinders church progress and growth.

In addition, Methodism's frequent transfer of ministers and the number of congregations under each minister leads to insufficient pastoral services and discourages long-term dreams by the ministers. This is perceived to lead to spiritual malnourishment of Methodist Christians and retarded physical developments in most Methodist churches. It is claimed also that Methodists misuse the democracy they are given and make choices that are detrimental to the growth of the church, such as electing leaders that do not meet the spiritual standards or qualifications of a church leader. These leaders become dictatorial and lord it over members while others mislead the church and even block any meaningful deliberations. Some are seen as more corporeal than spiritual and resist even positive change in the church. Others are resistant to anything new and suspicious, giving a simple excuse of 'we do not do that', referring to Methodist practices.

On Pentecostal churches, I noted that only Methodist participants pointed at the absence of a governance system and criticised the freestyle running of the church. They noted the negative aspects attributed to a single person/family management as opposed to the corporate governance in the Methodist Church. Most Pentecostal churches are individual/family owned and therefore they do not have clear management structures. Worshippers take instructions from this family or pastor and this has both positive and negative attributes. The positive ones, such as the freedom of a pastor to conceive a vision and implement it without having to pursue

approval from a higher office, work well and contribute to making these churches popular, while the negative aspects, such as pastors' demands for total submission from followers is given only slight attention. This style of management is seen to work without the bureaucracy experienced in MCK and this allows decision making to be easier, quicker and less involving. The system is thus more flexible since adjustments are made in response to the current needs of the congregation. So, while Methodism takes suggestions through various levels of decision making, risking disapproval, in the Pentecostal church decisions are made and implemented quickly by the pastor.

Pastoral services are more efficient in Pentecostal churches because the pastor/s serve mostly one congregation. He/she is able to invest all their effort and time there in teaching, preaching, visiting and praying with members, fellowship and other pastoral responsibilities. This helps the church to grow strong both spiritually and physically. Pastors are also not transferred, unlike the MCK ministers, so they can make plans for their congregations and implement them over many years. This challenges the effectiveness of lay preachers and one minister serving several congregations in MCK.

Contrary to the Methodist Church's democratic style of management, the Pentecostal system is sometimes seen as dictatorial and oppressive. It is blamed for not allowing divergent views and therefore oppressing such characters and even making effort to push them out. The pastors do not account for any monies collected or any resources the church may have, as expressed by IP02: 'I feel that those leaders in the Pentecostal churches must give themselves to accountability. How would they spend the money, how they handle the church business.' (2019, p.11). Loyalty is demanded from leaders and members and at times, the church is susceptible to splitting, especially when a gifted person has a desire to be a pastor and is pushed out. This aspect is likely to be a cause of movement for those who leave the Pentecostal churches, although most members remain comfortable as is evident by their continuous loyalty and the growing popularity of the Pentecostal churches.

4.4.0. Teaching/Preaching

The fourth theme that came out of the research is that of teaching, including preaching. Teaching here will refer to all kinds of Christian knowledge impartation available to Christians through sermons, seminars, retreats, conferences, and Bible studies. As with the earlier themes discussed, teaching the word of God featured prominently in the interviews. Most people in Nyambene lack deep knowledge of the word of God and thus teaching of the same is important. This is due to lack of Bibles and other Christian literature in addition to illiteracy, with almost half of churchgoers lacking the ability to read and write.

Five participants have identified teaching as important in grounding Christians in faith and the practice of Christianity. Through teachings, they can hear the voice of God as they expect when they go to church. ‘My expectation is to be fed on the word of God’ (IP02, 2019, p.1). Not only do they need to be taught the word but they also need to hear what God is saying to them in their context and current situations because it is only then that they will be able to identify with this word. Respondents seem more interested in how teachings are done or not done in different denominations, and especially their relevance to hearers, but not necessarily the theological basis of the teachings. In this research, I was able to hear more of how Pentecostal churches share their teachings and how these teachings contribute to building up faithful and satisfied followers. However, I did not hear teaching in the Methodist Church receive credit. Instead, respondents complained that Methodism does not teach consistently and that preaching is given insufficient time in comparison with the Pentecostal churches.

4.4.1. Teaching/Preaching in the Methodist Church

Most respondents felt the Methodist Church was held captive by its pursuance of lectionary guidelines. Thus, preaching becomes a routine programme to be followed making it unable to have impact on its members. Participants claim that the lectionary readings fail to connect people with a present God. It may look like this God does not understand what is happening on earth and he remains an abstract

God. Preaching the same message or doing the same readings across the connexion is challenged:

I used to be very much vexed and upset about the Methodist setup. ...when you borrowed a service to preach in the church, I would be given a book to read and told that the service which is getting preached at Mombasa is the same service which is supposed to be preached at Thamare. I found that the spirit of God did not move the same in different churches. Because the spirit of God will want people to be preached salvation at Thamare and when you go to Mombasa, maybe the Holy Spirit of God would want people to be preached different things (IP05, 2019, p.3).

For example, if one is preaching to a congregation where famine or disease is threatening their lives and the lectionary readings that day point to 'humility and obedience' or 'fruits of the Holy Spirit' members would find it difficult to relate to it and they may leave the church with a desire to hear more.

According to participants, there are areas in which members are not knowledgeable and would need deliberate teachings, but they have gone unattended for a long time because the MCK service programmes do not address them. Respondents from both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches cited the example of giving tithes as a neglected area: '...most of the youths in Methodist they are not taught how to give' says IP03, (2019, p.5) and adds that almost all the giving in Pentecostal churches is done by the young people. IP01 adds that even if a need is very conspicuous in church and affecting the church, there is no time set aside in the programme to address that need: 'let's say for example about giving. People are very much down on giving. This one cannot be addressed in the Methodist set up according to the way we program our readings and topics.' (IP01, 2019, p.3). Similarly, IP03 claims that in MCK no teaching is done on prayer and fasting. 'We don't teach now today we are not eating. We are going to seek the Lord, there will be a fast on a Saturday, there is no eating' (2019, p.5). This is an indication that there is need for the Methodist Church to do more deliberate teachings than they do now on issues that the lectionary is not covering, but considered important in the lives of their members.

In addition to that, participants feel that the Methodist Church preaches the word for only a short time and every Sunday they have a different preacher and a different

sermon theme. Respondents suggest they wish to see more consistent teaching, over a longer period: ‘if also we can have teachings that maybe last for a month or so exploring a specific topic so that people can really understand as opposed to just having a sermon every Sunday that is entirely different from the other...’(IP02, 2019, p.2). Respondents use the Pentecostal churches’ commitment to teaching and their mode of teaching to judge and criticise the Methodist Church.

4.4.2. Teaching/preaching in Pentecostal churches:

The Pentecostal church preaching/teachings can be described as issue-based or situational. They are tailored to achieve a certain purpose, which the pastor considers necessary. The pastor is able to plan for a series of teachings on areas they feel their members are not well informed.

For example, if you want people to be more in prayer life, you would concentrate on teaching about prayer, that you see the change that you desire. Of course, being a pastor, I will assess the areas of weakness and I concentrate on teaching people (IP04, 2019, p.2).

It is perceived that the Pentecostal church members are well grounded in faith and knowledge of the word, which participants feel is necessary for all Christians regardless of their denomination. Pentecostal church teachings/preaching is usually aimed at addressing a certain issue that is challenging, misleading or confusing the community in which they live, similar to the way Paul wrote the epistles to address the then prevailing circumstances. It could be an encouragement, a rebuke, a correction, conversion, or a discipline the pastor wants to instil into his/her followers. Most teachings and preaching are motivational or encouraging messages to strengthen worshippers’ faith and to give hope in a society full of discouraging situations. As they do this, participants note that they are keen to address issues affecting their members. ‘But in the other setup, the Pentecostal setup, when an issue arises, it can be addressed through the preaching’ (IP01, 2019, p.3). Not only does the Pentecostal pastor teach or preach on a topic that addresses a current situation but he/she also prays about those situations and this speaks direct to peoples’ pressing issues. IP03 says it is the word of the season believed to come from God: ‘pastor or priest of that altar, he speaks to God and asks God what am I going to tell

the people? What is the word of the season?’ (2019, p.10). No doubt, such messages will sound quite relevant as compared to the mainline churches’ messages that do not change regardless of the situation people are experiencing.

Pentecostal churches according to respondents give ‘sufficient’ time to preaching compared to MCK: ‘we have mostly where I attended around one hour of the word of God (IP06, 2019, p.3). This means respondents appreciate that the Pentecostal churches take time to teach or preach and normally are not restricted to the common thirty minutes most preachers are advised to take in MCK. In addition to long sermons, Pentecostal churches organise seminars and other forums where different groups learn the Bible and other virtues of Christian living: ‘they are also given an opportunity to have retreats and seminars. For example, young couples’ seminars so in the Pentecostal churches...they are taken care of maybe through seminars, through retreats’ (IP01, 2019, p.2). Since Pentecostal churches are mostly single congregations under one or more pastors, they have less structural issues to address on Sundays like the Methodist Church. This, it seems, enables them to dedicate their Sunday to ‘more of spiritual things like praise and worship, up to a particular time then we have maybe several hours of prayers, intense prayers and then we have mostly where I attended around one hour of the word of God’ (IP06, 2019, p.3). Members therefore feel they have spent sufficient time with God.

Pentecostal churches are also perceived to preach a word that is impactful, a sermon that would lead to changed lives. Respondents feel such transformative preaching is needed as pointed by IP04:

The true word which is inspired of God, which is able to transform my life. And make me to be close to God...where the word is preached under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit where the word of God is shared and you can really receive the insights from the word of God, (IP04, 2019, p.1).

Even when most congregants are converted Christians, they still expect a delivery of the word of God where they feel the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Most Pentecostal preachers are quite charismatic and they create this kind of scenario where members are convinced that the Holy Spirit is at work.

Although Pentecostal churches appear to provide more satisfactory teaching, they are criticised by two respondents (IP02 and IP06) for giving teachings of dubious quality. The Pentecostal church pastors sometimes teach that which would favour them and their church, and, at times, they indoctrinate their followers. IP06 notes this danger in particular about teaching on financial accountability:

The way they have been taught is like when you are giving to a pastor, its like you are not giving to him actually, you are giving to God. That is the mentality, so nobody bothers really where he takes the money. It's my part I have given the money to God so whether the pastor eats it or he does what he wants with it, its God (2019, p.4).

This teaching may not allow members to question anything the pastor does with the money and other resources.

Pentecostal Churches also can be used to propagate harmful doctrines, as identified by IP02 who says that they sometimes teach a message of 'how much we have to do for God so that he can do something in return' (2019, p.4). Then they advise their members not to miss attending church, giving tithes and offerings, attending fellowships in addition to obeying the man of God (pastor) in order to please God. IP02 faults this teaching, which to him feels like bribing God to influence him to action, while Christians ought to believe in a God of love who cares for his people out of love, not because of what they do for him: 'let me call it like bribe God so that he can intervene in their lives' (IP02, 2019, p.4).

Another negative view from participants is that Pentecostal churches teach people to rely on the pastor rather than God, and this seems to generate dissatisfaction with their teachings.

They want you to be dependent on the word of the man of God, on the prophecies of the man of God. They don't want to give you a scripture or a doctrine that helps you to focus on God'. They really insist on teaching you and guiding you and, and micromanagement, they want to follow you every moment, what are you (IP02, 2019, p.6).

This could make followers feel as if they are answerable to the pastor and to live in a kind of fear and a perception that they may not do without the pastor.

4.4.3. Observations.

From the findings above, I noted that the Pentecostal churches scored highly in the area of teaching their members, with three MCK and two Pentecostal church respondents commended the practice. Teaching is normally done through different means and forums to impart knowledge, evangelise and trigger salvation, instil certain Christian disciplines, enforce loyalty, address emerging issues affecting members and empower them spiritually. Respondents appreciate the commitment to teach in the Pentecostal churches seen in the sufficient time pastors give to preaching or the teaching of the word. They also commend the ability of these pastors to be in touch with members' situations and address them in their preaching.

MCK on the other hand received criticism in equal measure for not giving attention to issues outside the liturgy and for ministers/leaders' ignorance to context as they promote liturgical loyalty. It is interesting to note that the preaching done in the Methodist Church seems not to appeal to respondents nor does it satisfy them such that members still desire more. It does not fulfil their hunger for spiritual knowledge and encouragement, and it does not address the current challenging situations members are facing for which they desire a spiritual voice. '...they should know that people are really thirsty of a spiritual fulfilment (IP06, 2019, p.6) says IP06 in reference to the Methodist leaders. He also admits that he will keep on attending conferences organised by the Pentecostal churches as he waits for MCK to change: 'maybe you can always seek help somewhere else...I will continue attending maybe where I hear there is a conference (2019, p.5).

4.5.0. Identification and employment of talents

The identification and opportunity to employ talents entails the church leaders recognising, appreciating and allowing room for members to make use of gifts that they are endowed with in serving God within the church. It also involves provision of a favourable environment where those talents can be identified, expressed and developed. This importance of this factor in church affiliation involves mostly the youth although older people also experience the need depending on their area of interest. Interests depend on the level of maturity of the person involved, and so they vary from minor responsibilities such as usher, choir leader/member, prayer

coordinator, music director to major ones like church chairperson, preacher, pastor or assistant pastor. All the six respondents identified the trend that talents are either not recognised or allowed to develop, in traditional churches, but are recognised, developed and allowed to grow by other churches. Respondents have portrayed the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches as follows:

4.5.1. Identification and Employment of Talents in the Methodist Church

All respondents both in the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches criticised the Methodist Church for not providing room and facilitation for young people to explore and develop their talents. ‘Most of the youth feel that they are not given an opportunity to...’ (IP01, 2019. p.1). IP01 repeated this phrase – ‘not given an opportunity to’ four times within about five minutes of the interview, as he talked about the dissatisfaction of the youth in MCK. According to him, the youth feel they have no chance to participate in anything in the church because church leaders deny them the opportunity. It seems the Methodist Church leaders have ignored the youth since they do not notice their presence or consider them for any responsibility in the church. Respondents feel that failure to recognise the youth has made them feel dispensable and so seek attention elsewhere.

The Methodist Church is perceived to side-line the young people from leadership roles: ‘...they feel they are not given an opportunity to lead in the church’ (IP01, 2019, p.1). ‘Opportunity to lead’ here may mean recognition and being given responsibilities that would make them feel needed and their presence appreciated. Such responsibilities, which IP01 says are provided in Pentecostal churches – ‘They are given the roles of leading the cell groups...opportunity to lead in ushering department...’ (2019, p.1) – would involve them and make them active in the church.

Movement is understood to be caused by the church not recognising the youth by giving them responsibilities and allowing them to exercise their gifts. IP03 expresses it thus: ‘...but for me my real reason for moving from Methodist Church to a Pentecostal church, one of the reasons was the opportunity...’ (2019, p.2). He shared his frustration about how leaders in MCK did not allow him an opportunity

to exercise his gift as a musician. The young people in particular seek to find people who will recognise them and purposively grow their talents, to support them to accomplish their dreams within the church.

In particular, the Methodist Church is perceived to have missed the opportunity to nurture gifted pastors, leaders and preachers, who have consequently left for Pentecostal churches. 'God may be calling you to be a singer, to be a preacher, to be another minister in another area of calling and you feel the church you are in may not be opening that room'(IP04, 2019, p.4). Some of those who have become pastors and opened their own thriving churches: 'In our region a number of Pentecostal movements are led by pastors and they are doing some good job, you may hear they say [I was also a Methodist]' (IP04, 2019, p.5). Although there could be other reasons for such pastors not achieving their calling within the Methodist Church, it is evident that they had gifts that the Methodist Church failed to identify or frustrated.

It is also noted that (according to participants) Methodist Church leaders demean some gifts by giving those practising them labels or names that have no dignity. Participant IP03, who left the Methodist Church due to frustrations, says the Methodist leaders referred to him as '*kijana wa keyboard*', (IP03, 2019, p. 5) Swahili for 'the keyboard boy'. He feels this to be a derogatory term showing how dispensable he was to them and, for sure, the church chairlady dismissed him, 'shouted at me, "*unafikiria wewe ni nani? Tunaweza fanya bila wewe*" (whom do you think you are; we can do without you)' (2019, p.3).

Two respondents, IP01 and IP02, recognise a positive attribute in the Methodist Church despite the overwhelming criticism. IP02 feels that the church opened up opportunities for him to serve and points at the men and youth groups where he can use his gifts without necessarily having to do a degree in theology to qualify.

I felt the Methodist was the place for me because, as a minister and as a, servant of God, it gave me an opportunity to serve...doesn't require me to actually pursue a theology degree, but taking my talents and my knowledge, I'm able to inspire those who are given to me like the youth (2019, p.9).

Having spent a number of years in a Pentecost church, IP02 had experienced a situation where he was not allowed any space to participate in anything so he appreciated the space given in MCK. The same opportunity to grow and develop gifts of leadership was experienced by IP01 from the Methodist Church and he acknowledges this 'I also get to grow on leadership skills because also we get some experience in leadership' (IP01, 2019, p.1). This is an indication that, despite criticism of MCK not recognising and nurturing talents, there are those who appreciate the church for their growth in leadership and getting space to develop their gifts. This suggests that there is some unevenness in practice and experience.

4.5.2. Identification and employment of talents in the Pentecostal Churches

In the Pentecostal churches, the situation is portrayed as better than that in the Methodist Church, although scrutiny may reveal a different scenario. Pentecostal pastors have immense authority in the running of their church and so they determine the leaders to serve in their churches and distribute responsibilities. However, unlike MCK where most of the leaders are old or middle aged, Pentecostal churches have many young leaders, dictated by the composition of the congregations. Respondents often talked about Pentecostal churches in comparison with the Methodists Church, but they only occasionally isolated preferred practices of the Pentecostal church independently.

Respondent IP01 claimed that the Pentecostal churches give the youth responsibilities such as ushering, leading small fellowship groups and this makes them feel recognised. It is indeed an opportunity for them to test and practice their leadership skills. Such positions involve a large number of youths and this creates an environment and feeling of being appreciated as part of the church.

Pentecostal churches are credited for their ability to identify gifted young people such as musicians and helping them develop their skills. IP03 emphasised the attention, care and respect he received from his pastor after he joined his church and the pastor recognised his talent: '...pastor exposing me to music industry, pastor is taking me to these concerts...I told you I am a music minister in my church' (2019, p.4). The participant is sharing his experience in the Pentecostal

church where he is even paid for being in charge of music in the church while in MCK he was dismissed and pushed out.

There are, however, areas the Pentecostal churches are not performing well in empowering its members, as IP02 noted. He claims that leadership skills and talents are suppressed and seen as a threat since the church belongs to an individual or a single family:

Divergent views are not so welcome...so believers who want to grow to that platform of a service and coming out in the open to serve God without fear are not accorded that chance. And if they rise, they are seen as competition. So most of them end up being expelled' (IP02, 2019, p.10).

IP02, who is past his youth, feels that one may not develop into leadership positions in a Pentecostal church because it all depends on the pastor and those seen to have potential of competing with the pastor are pushed out of the church. Normally such people start their own churches while others, like him, may choose to go back to the mainline churches. Unlike Methodism, where becoming a church minister is accepted and guided to maturity, in Pentecostal churches this is suppressed unless one leaves and starts their own church.

4.5.3. Observations

I realise that most respondents who spoke about the theme of identification and employment of talents in both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches actually mean involvement of young people in church activities that show recognition of their presence, their gifts and acceptance by their churches. Therefore, it may not really entail a vigorous exercise to identify and grow talents but rather a show of interest and appreciation, allowing young people a forum to support them to exercise and grow their gifts and to feel a part of the church and its decision-making systems.

The Methodist Church was overwhelmingly criticised for not allowing young people to serve and develop their talents within the church, but the Pentecostal churches, which could be equally guilty in terms of developing leaders, did not attract such blame. One reason might be that respondents feel that the Pentecostal

churches work closely with the youth and give them responsibilities such as ushering, music director, hospitality stewards, worship leader, intercessors, prayer coordinators, and other ministries in the church.

4.6.0. Pastor-Believer Relationship

Pastor-believer relationship is a broad theme that respondents expressed in different forms. It will entail pastoral attention in terms of pastoral care given by the pastor, and a more mutual relationship that some participants called spiritual mentorship or role models. Respondents feel that church members respond to the care and attention they receive from their pastor/ministers in terms of praying for them, visiting them, and to some extent addressing their social, developmental and family situations. Respondent IP02 contends that some people go to church for their needs to be met and to hear the pastor speaking over their lives. ‘Some go to church because they need to have their needs addressed or the men of God speaking over their lives’ (IP02, 2017, p.4) The extent to which the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches address this need is examined below in the respondents’ views:

4.6.1. Pastor-Believer Relationship in the Methodist Church

The Methodist Church was criticised for having a relatively weak relationship between ministers and their members. Participants give various reasons as to why they feel minister-member relationship is so low key. Firstly, MCK ministers are not always available to the members when they need them: ‘...when you are oppressed, maybe there are some things you want to ask or you would want this servant of God to serve you...you don’t get this kind of service’ (IP05, 2019, p.4). This is expressing a frustration of not getting the minister when one is feeling pressed by issues and needing a minister to pray and encourage them. This may happen because a Methodist minister takes care of many congregations, making his/her job demanding and at the same time unsatisfactory. They programme their pastoral visits so that they can factor all the congregations in their care but still members have to wait for long before they can see their pastor, as IP01 contends: ‘Now if a pastor is taking care of ten churches, maybe it will take sometimes ten weeks before they visit a church. And that one leaves a lot of gaps’ (IP01, 2019,

p.1). The minister in such a case is only able to give average services because he/she has no sufficient time to take full care of the members. This hinders the development of trust so that needy members may not confide in their minister. A Methodist minister is seen to have so much to do and this affects his pastoral duties: 'I see like the pastor in Methodist has a lot of, eh, has more to do, has more administrative responsibilities which overtake the element of taking care of a single flock' (IP04, 2019, p.3).

Frequent transfers of ministers is considered to cause weak relationship between the MCK minister and members. Those who confide in their ministers and build strong bonds feel a big loss when such a minister is transferred. Since this is a common practice in MCK, it affects relationships and frustrates the members who now may not open up to a minister for fear of losing him/her halfway through their problem. 'But in Methodist you might rotate under very many pastors. He may be good but is different and a person may not very easily identify with them' (IP04, 2019, p.4). It additionally affects development of spiritual attachment and the opportunity for the minister to mentor strong Christians. The spiritual father figure, as found in the Pentecostal churches, is missing in MCK and it seems this model may not be possible due to frequent transfers and many congregations under one minister.

Pentecostal respondents accuse Methodist members of lacking respect and reverence for their ministers and they behave as if they are at the same level of authority. This shared authority, they claim, can be intimidating for the minister and hinders formation of healthy interactions with his/her members. 'In Methodist, it is whereby the flocks make decisions...again, I came to find out that there is no loyalty in Methodist, there is no humility' (IP03, 2019, p.12).

Respondents, however – both from the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches – identify some good practices in the Methodist Church and claim they strengthen the church. Pastoral visits in MCK are perceived as more effective because (according to respondents), they are done as part of the ministers' normal responsibilities and so members are visited with or without needs: '...yea, you realise they follow up

their members, reverend going places getting people, and they know their people, they follow them up. Methodist will go door-to-door look for people pray with you, talk to you' (IP06, 2019, p.4). This is encouraging socially and spiritually for the members as it shows their minister's concern and love for them, visiting just to check on them and for fellowship.

The Methodist belief in the priesthood of all believers was credited for encouraging members to feel equal and sharing in service to God. It involves a level of freedom and democracy and this opens space for members to utilize their gifts without restrictions. IP02 notes and appreciates this: 'and then there is the aspect of priesthood of all believers...so that if God has given you a talent, they allow you to use it on the platforms that are available within the church' (2019, p.12). The Methodist Church holds to the belief that every believer has direct access to God and not only a minister. They therefore have responsibility to serve God and that is why lay preachers and other Christians access the pulpit freely.

Another positive attribute is the humility and servanthood of the Methodist ministers as perceived by respondents. Respondents who have left the Methodist Church for Pentecostal churches and came back notice this attribute because they compare with the Pentecostal church practice where the pastor exercises immense authority, is revered and treated highly. The free and relaxed sharing between MCK ministers and their members portrays a very cordial relationship that is healthy for a church where all are equal before God. 'I love the humility where even the perceived great men of God sit down with the fellow congregation, they share a meal together, they are able to interact, I think that is the perfect example that Jesus taught us...' (IP02, 2019, p.13).

4.6.2. Pastor-Believer Relationship in the Pentecostal Churches.

One of the strong attributes of the Pentecostal churches is the availability of the pastor. Unlike the Methodist Church, participants portray the pastor in the Pentecostal churches as always available to serve his/her members. They claim that this close interaction makes church members feel cared for so that their spiritual and social needs are addressed.

He will meet your spiritual needs, he will attend to your social needs, he will attend to your kind of development needs, attend to your family attend to the needs that are actually outside the spiritual needs. Because this person is there for you' (IP04, 2019, p.6).

Such services are offered by a pastor who, they emphasise, 'is there for you', meaning that the Pentecostal pastors are always available and never transferred. 'Let me even say he is not transferable' (2019, p.7). The pastor is able to develop a father-child or mother-child relationship where believers are mentored to grow at an individual level in an environment that feels like home, according to participants. 'Also fatherhood would make me to remain, actually it is like a second home' (2019, p.6) says IP04 and adds that after experiencing the fatherhood care in the Pentecostal churches no one would want to go back to the Methodist Church.

The second attribute is where respondents feel that in the Pentecostal churches, the pastor is highly revered, respected, and obeyed.

right now even my pastor I am telling you the truth, he calls me when we are talking bishop and he says son I need you here, at the office right now, Since it is my man of God has said that, the priest that blessed me, that every Sunday speaks to me, I will leave the interview and go. I honour that man because I know he is my grace. I know where he is taking me, he is the one that prophecies good things for me, he is the one that prays for me (IP03, 2019, p.12).

Due to the availability of the pastor and the fact that they are never transferred, they spend all their time and energies with their congregation and so they teach them discipline including respect for the men and women of God. Pastors are perceived as God's spokespersons and so they are obeyed without question: '...when God speaks it is when the shepherd speaks' (IP03, 2019, p.12).

Respondents from the Methodist Church observe the effectiveness of the need-based pastoral attention done in the Pentecostal: '...they visit each and every time that the people have the needs for prayers' (IP01, 2019, p.1). This is made possible by the availability of the pastor since he/she has one congregation compared to a Methodist pastor who has many congregations, which may be far apart.

One respondent who left the Pentecostal church a few years ago looked at the pastor-believer relationship in the Pentecostal churches quite critically and has a

different understanding. IP02 perceives the relationship as enslaving, domineering and even intimidating to the members. He perceives it as a kind of pastor worship: 'like Idol worship, we want to kneel before a man. We want to literally try to worship them' (IP02, 2019, p.12). This hampers the independent thinking of the congregants: 'I think these churches develop a Christian who is dependent on the man of God as opposed to dependent on God himself' (IP02, 2019, p.5). He perceives this mentorship as a practice that does not allow believers to focus on God but rather on the pastor as the only one who knows and shows the way to God: '...they really insist on teaching you and guiding you and micromanagement, they want to follow you every moment, what are you doing, who are you seeing...' (2019, p.6)

4.6.3. Observations

Concerning the theme of pastor/believer relationship, it has been noted that respondents from both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches value pastoral visits, fellowships and prayers (pastoral care). The Methodist participants express dissatisfaction about a situation where members are not able to access their ministers when they need them. This puts to scrutiny the Methodist Church practice of one pastor serving many congregations, because he/she may not be efficient despite being overworked. When Christians lack the services of a minister, they are likely to be underfed, hindered in spiritual growth, fall prey to false teachings and sometimes seek services elsewhere.

In comparison to the strong relationship between pastor and believers in the Pentecostal churches, the Methodist Church is weak, which is a significant factor in decisions about church affiliation.

4.7.0. Friction and misunderstanding in the Church

Friction and misunderstanding results from disputes and arguments that arise, causing disagreements among congregants, leaders or between leaders and members. These disputes could be between persons who worship in the same congregation, or could arise within the church concerning church matters. Participants now in the Pentecostal churches noted that they had experienced

difficulties at different levels in MCK that caused dissatisfaction and consequent movements, especially when they had not been resolved amicably. This theme is highlighted especially in relation to disagreements and friction that occur between church leaders and the young people. Of interest to my research purpose, respondents pointed out these disagreements and misunderstanding in the Methodist Church and not in the Pentecostal churches although one respondent did mention splitting in the Pentecostal churches.

4.7.1. Friction and misunderstanding in the Methodist Church

Research participants from the Pentecostal churches had all experienced misunderstanding and friction at some point in their time in the Methodist Church. Regardless of whether they left the Methodist Church immediately or they had persisted, they attest to disagreement with leaders at some point and this created an unfriendly environment. ‘The moving was culminated out of even a personal difference either with a leader, or a specific pastor’ (IP04 2019, p.4). In most cases, the youth felt that they were not given a hearing and when this happened, leaders misunderstood them and hurriedly made decisions not supported by the youth.

We were called aside and asked a lot of questions as to why we feel like we are being suppressed in the church. We explained a lot of things, but before even they understood the reason as to why we did that, some of the leaders decided that... (IP05, 2019, p.4).

This is a case where the youth were pressing to be allowed to do their worship in the morning before the main service so that they could pray freely and dance. They wanted fellowships to exercise their spiritual gifts but leaders did not support them: ‘there were times even we were supposed to be expelled, a time even the church gates were locked. And one day even the police were called so that we can be stopped from singing loudly and attending morning glories’ (IP05, 2019, p.4). This was a clear disagreement with the church leaders.

IP03 disagreed with the church chairperson about his music talent and ‘there is a time after the service she called me and I remember it was on 12th. She shouted at me and said that you are a one-man show...whom do you think you are? We can do without you’ (IP03, 2019, P.3). Friction developed between him and the church

chairperson and continued until he left the Methodist Church. Respondent IP02 however seem to see something good in the Methodist Church and suggested that if anything is denied it is always explained: ‘if you are to get any resistance then it has to be explained’ (IP02, 2019, p.4). This suggests that, according to him, for the collision to happen one dissatisfied team must have rejected the explanations given by the other.

4.7.2. Observation

From respondents’ reports, it is noted that disagreements arose between church leaders and the youth in the Methodist Church due to a desire of the young people to introduce change in their own churches. Leaders seem not to understand the youth, particularly because they were introducing practices that were new and unacceptable in the perception of their leaders. A collision of interest developed and since the youth were denied space and voice, they felt unwanted and found it difficult to be spectators in their own churches: ‘youth feel that they are not given an opportunity to worship or to sing...they are not given an opportunity to lead. They feel now the church is for the old people...’ (IP01, 2019, p.1).

The theme of friction and misunderstanding did not come up in the Pentecostal churches, an indication probably that it is not experienced due to other factors like church management structure, which gives the pastor absolute authority.

4.8.0. Evangelism and Publicity

Evangelism and publicity is one theme that came up as one way the Pentecostal churches attract new members and maintain them in their churches. This came from one Pentecostal church respondent IP03, who feels it is an effective way of growing the church by reaching out rather than counting on disgruntled members from other churches finding an alternative in them. Evangelism involves public preaching and personal witness intended to spread the gospel outside the church, while publicity is making known or advertising the church.

4.8.1. Evangelism and Publicity in the Pentecostal Churches

This is an approach the Pentecostal churches use, where church members go out to preach to individuals and conduct crusades in areas that they feel have possible targets for conversion. ‘...in my church, we have branded t-shirts, we are going around town, preaching in open air market, and people are getting born again and some of them we are picking them with our own vans’ (IP03,2019, p.9). This is done hand in hand with publicity where they advertise their church and the programs they run: ‘...there is a bus that is rotating around the town preaching about Jesus of a Pentecostal church’ (IP03, 2019, p.9).

The purpose of this outside preaching is to lead those who believe to conversion and invite them to join their church. They do this by mounting a vehicle with loud speakers and driving round promoting their church and inviting people to join, of course giving them reasons why they should come. They parade beautifully groomed choir members who sing melodious gospel music that attracts attention and admiration. In addition, they offer those who want to join their church transport in the church van that moves to different places every Sunday morning to collect and take people to church and back after service: ‘...we tell them please by 10.00am be standing at the stage we come and collect you’ (IP03, 2019, p.9). Not only do they get new converts from this, but they also attract people from other churches. According to the respondent, the Methodist Church does not do such publicity or evangelism. ‘...but I have never seen a Methodist bus or maybe Methodist movement...telling people who they are and what they are doing’ (IP03, 2019, p.9). Indeed, no other respondent talked about this theme.

4.8.2. Observations

It is important to note that movement and change of affiliation does not only happen because church members are disgruntled and feel something is missing in their church. This factor is a reminder of the positive decisions people may make to move churches. Pentecostal church initiatives and efforts to market their churches do attract members of other churches into theirs. Just as most respondents seem not to consider this theme of evangelism and publicity as important, it could be possible that it has skipped the attention of most leaders in the traditional mission churches.

4.9.0. Impacts of changing affiliations on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod

Respondents shared their experience of the movements of Christians across the Synod and how this affected particularly the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches. As noted from the responses above, the trend is from the Methodist Churches to the Pentecostal churches. However, smaller counter-trends from the Pentecostal churches to the Methodist churches and movements within churches were also evident. In this report, my concern is the movement between the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches and I will concentrate on the effects this has on the Methodist Church in the Nyambene Synod. These movements have affected the Pentecostal churches also, as pointed out by respondents in areas such as increased growth in numbers and spread, increase in pride of some pastors, undermining of other denominations, and high demand for euphoric worship causing pastors to perform fake miracles and preach questionable doctrines. However, in focusing on the effects on the Methodist Church, the following can be noted:

4.9.1. Retarded Growth

Respondents from both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches have identified slow growth in the Methodist Church, to be attributed to young people leaving the church. As discovered in this research, according to respondents, the majority of the people who leave the Methodist church are the youth. Therefore, the Methodist Church risks the challenge of an increasingly ageing congregation who are financially and socially dependent on the young energetic class. ‘We are left with the aged, they are left there, the potential young people leave the church and that is now killing the future of the church’ (IP06, 2019, p.2). IP06 sees this to have a far-reaching effect in that the potential inherent in young people is transferred to the Pentecostal churches. This potential could be in their talents, resources, energy and knowledge.

Consequently, IP04 contends that those who leave the Methodist Church become successful pastors while the church they left continues to stagnate: ‘...you may hear

them say [I was also a Methodist] but you might see a local Methodist church struggling for a number of years. It does not grow, doesn't do much development' (2019, p.5). IP04 says that Pentecostal churches start and grow faster than most Methodist churches. Old people left in MCK may not have financial and physical stamina to sustain a church including evangelism. In fact, IP03 adds that most of the financial giving in the Pentecostal churches is done by the young people: 'most of the people that give in Pentecostal churches are the youth' (2019, p.5).

4.9.2. Flexibility

Flexibility in this case refers to changes in the church, involving relaxing some of the strictly followed regulations and procedures to allow modification and acceptance of new practices. While the Methodist Church has a reputation for rigidity, the continual movement of people away from the church – and in particular the disagreements that have been part of that process – has led to some loosening of the Methodist Church's grip on its past traditions, bringing about a little flexibility. 'Methodism has changed. Nowadays we have embraced worship rather than previously when we were sticking on hymns...nowadays the church is flexible on accepting maybe other songs that are for praise and worship' (IP01, 2019, p.3).. The traditional Methodist style of singing has been rather quiet and controlled with minimal physical actions, a style that has increasingly received criticism from the Pentecostal and charismatic-oriented Christians. Participants admit that the Methodist Church is becoming more accommodating in terms of songs sung, even accepting the use of choruses. This in essence means alterations to the Sunday service program (liturgy) to allow time and space for this.

Flexibility is also witnessed in the way worship services are conducted in that some Methodist leaders are relenting their strict observance of liturgical guidelines and procedures. Respondents perceive MCK to be conforming increasingly to Pentecostal practices and, for those that have started changing, their worship is becoming similar to what happens in the Pentecostal churches: '... it is conforming to a lot of things including fellowships, Holy Spirit and those kind of things. Worship is just almost the same' (IP05, 2019, p.7). It has in fact

brought about the charismatic¹⁵ kind of Christianity within the traditional mission churches. Here, the preacher in charge of a service in MCK incorporates time for vibrant singing and spontaneous prayers but still takes control of the service so that aspects of procedure are still observed.

Participants note that fellowships and Holy Spirit issues mentioned above are no longer contentious in some of the Methodist churches although others are yet to get there. In some of the churches, frequent fellowships are held where those involved sing loudly, worship and pray in tongues. It is also common to find overnight prayers (commonly known as '*kesha*') in a Methodist Church – something that never happened a decade ago. In addition, dancing and hand clapping in the church is now common unlike earlier when this would have been termed as indiscipline and prohibited. Where this is practiced, services have improved, as IP01 notes: 'As Methodists we have improved' (2019, p.3).

From a different perspective, participants believe that MCK is compromising to modern influences too uncritically. In their attempt to please and retain the youth, leaders can give too much freedom. Respondents claim that no guidance or teaching is given to the youth on Christian virtues, so secular behaviours and practices infiltrate the church:

Modernization of the church to fit the young people. That is a nice technique but it may not work for long because, we cannot accommodate everything in the church that the young people want. So the church should be in a position to give directives (IP06, 2019, p.7).

Modernization of the church, according to respondents, involves the way the youth behave, dress and even the practices they bring into church and the type of music they sing and styles they adopt as IP06 claims: '... their dressing, their dancing styles, which are used in the club at night they come with them in the church' (IP06, 2019, p.7).

¹⁵ Charismatic here refers to those Christians who believe and exhibit Pentecostal characteristics but remain in the mainline churches like Methodist, Anglican or Catholic churches. They believe in the experience and manifestation of the spiritual gifts like tongues, miraculous deliverances, healing and others.

4.9.3. Animosity and Unhealthy Competition

Participants submit that movements of Christians from one church to another have caused bad blood and competition between churches and especially between Pentecostal churches and traditional churches. In the recent past, the impact of movement has started to be felt in the mainline churches who reacted by waging a battle against Pentecostal churches whom they accused of taking their youths: ‘...a soft or a silent conflict...people will talk that these people have some supernatural powers that they are snatching our youths’ (IP03, 2019, p.7). This has brought animosity between Christians and leaders of these denominations, with accusations and counter accusations:

When you leave A and go to B, superficially, people may want to tell you, you are saying our church is not good. It is like you are going to a better church. It is like we are not saved, you are saved. That movement, it brings a little bit of hatred. People don’t really love one another genuinely...if you leave a church...people you leave, they may feel you disregarded them (IP04, 2019, p.4).

Such competition is seen as hindering the real purpose of the church to preach the gospel and change the world, instead turning the church of Christ into enemies of one another. ‘...the mandate that Christ gave us was to reach out to the world through the gospel... And then also the churches recognizing that we serve the same God...and that we are not in a competition’ (IP02, 2019, p.7).

Hostility develops between Christians in the Methodist Church and those in the Pentecostal churches. This comes from a feeling of being undermined because those who leave sometimes criticise their mother churches: ‘...others may criticise a church where they have moved from’ (IP04, 2019, p.4). Those left in MCK are not happy, and they often castigate those who leave. Leaving is perceived as a crime committed against those who remain: ‘Different people feel offended even if they are not pastors...he is proud and the like, he thinks that is where God lives, it’s like he down-looks people that live in Methodist’ (IP05, 2019, p.10). Instead of Christians seeing each other as colleagues, they perceive them as opponents. Participants identified this attitude that has developed between the Pentecostal and traditional churches as unhealthy because its impacts reach far beyond the church. This unfriendly attitude touches on the family and social interactions. ‘The friends

that you had in Methodism, some of them think that from the date you left the church, it's like you joined a cult. That friendship now that communication ends...that kind of breakdown of the relationship' (IP05, 2019, p.10). This in essence, respondents say, brings social and religious discrimination based on which denomination you belong to: '...on general life of people, divisions come' (IP05, 2019, p.10). It seems social interactions are affected because people from the same village who belong to different denominations might respond to community activities such as weddings or fundraising based on church affiliation rather than village identity.

Participants see the reduction of membership in a church as loss of support, especially in the Pentecostal churches where the pastor benefits directly from the giving of his/her congregation. In Pentecostal churches, they say 'the more people you lose the less support you get'. This has indirectly affected Methodists as well because they lose the young, energetic and, in most cases, working people. Therefore, they lose their financial support and this has retarded church growth physically, numerically and spiritually in addition to affecting the ministers' remunerations. This has raised the awareness of Methodist ministers to hard work that would help increase their membership and, in effect, sustain their support in service. This requires improvement in the services, including teachings and organising events that are youth friendly, which can rejuvenate the energy and enthusiasm of the church. It is thus evident that participants see some competition as having positive impact in revitalising the Methodist Church '...it's like in Methodist Church nowadays the things we experienced the things that were happening are no longer there... and even the Christian growth is nowadays observed, I think I can say so' (IP05, 2019, p.7).

Some Methodist Church ministers and preachers have become quite Pentecostal because of the challenges from the Pentecostal influence. Others are themselves a product of a Pentecostal influence in schools, where most school preachers have been Pentecostal in nature. The influence of Pentecostal churches is transforming Methodism through young ministers coming into the Methodist ministry after receiving Pentecostal foundations in high schools: '...it's now becoming the same

because when people who are saved went in ministry, a lot of things changed’ (IP05, 2019, p.7).

4.9.4. Lack of Reliable Spiritual Guidance

Participants feel that movements of Christians from one church to another have led to confusion, because they are exposed to different teachings some of which are not genuinely biblical. This produces weak Christians with weak foundations since they do not settle to learn under one spiritual teacher. ‘When you move here and move there, you have no time to really learn and to understand the doctrine of Christ...you are confused. You don’t really know where to go and who to follow’ (IP02, 2019, p.8). In most cases, people end up following what they see as a practical faith according to their judgement. They claim to be in a church where the Holy Spirit is experienced in changing people’s lives. Their demand for experiential faith means they often disregard doctrine as preached in MCK in favour of Pentecostal preaching. Such confusion may make other worshippers end up in the hands of fake Pentecostal churches and pastors who fake miracles to impress them and extort money from them: ‘...we have fake fake fake, very fake people performing miracles which are not there’ (IP06, 2019, p.8).

Christians choose where to worship and if they get into a church that does not allow them to grow spiritual independence and strong doctrinal foundations, they may be misled to believe false teachings. IP06 feels there is need for church leaders to make sure ‘that church will be having people that can pray, people that are full of wisdom, people that are full of knowledge, so that we don’t just have average Christians who are ready to be told, everything they are told they follow’ (2019, p.7).

4.9.5. Observations

It has been revealed by interviewees that the changing religious affiliations taking place in Nyambene Synod affect all denominations in Nyambene Synod, though in different magnitude. Christians make choices to move and affiliate with different denominations, based not only on religious but also social economic reasons. The two broad categories of denominations at play here are the

Pentecostal and traditional mission churches in the region. It is noted that both the Pentecostal and the Methodist churches have experienced changes due to the movements of their members and as part of their attempt to keep pace with the changing society. The Methodist Church seem to be the most affected and is still struggling, while the Pentecostal churches seem at peace with the changes and they are adopting quite fast.

Respondents from both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches identified four major effects of religious movement on the Methodist Church. First, the Methodist Church has experienced retarded growth physically, numerically and spiritually. These movements deprive the church of personnel that are well endowed with resources, energy and enthusiasm to support the church. The second effect is that the Methodist Church has become more accommodative and flexible in its style of worship, procedures and observance of liturgical restrictions. How far this could go remains to be seen since this touches on the core identity of the Methodist Church and there is a risk of compromising its distinctive characteristics. This flexibility has, however, allowed a more charismatic form of Christianity into the Methodist Church.

The third effect is of a negative nature, not only for the church but also the community: animosity, competition and suspicion has developed between Christians, both within and without the church. Churchgoers tend to rate others from the church they attend positively. Methodists tend to consider those who have left as heretics, or as proud and disrespectful towards those left behind. Those who join the Pentecostal churches are thought to look down on those left behind as of lower spiritual standards, and this breaks friendships and social relationships. The fourth effect – again for both church and community – is confusion about which church has right spiritual direction and doctrines, and which teachings are authentic. The enthusiasm and aggressive attitude of the Pentecostal pastors, compared to the seemingly quiet comfortable approach of the Methodist ministers and preachers, can often be taken as a sign that the Pentecostals are more directly in relationship with God. However, the lack of system in the Pentecostal churches means minimal monitoring and that in turn

potentially exposes members to fake pastors and misleading teachings. This adds to the confusion faced by Christians as they seek to navigate this changing religious landscape.

4.9.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, religious affiliations in Nyambene Synod are determined not only by spiritual but also by socio-economic factors, which are interlinked. The key expectations of churchgoers is to gain knowledge of the word of God, grow spiritually and share fellowship with other Christians. Spiritual growth is the key purpose that is brought about by knowledge of the word of God and fellowship. Growing as a Christian does not only mean knowing the Bible but also living a life that is a witness to the blessings associated with being a Christian. It involves having their needs met, as IP02 revealed. Thus, a Christian expects their economic and social status to improve: God will rescue them from challenging situations as well as providing for their needs. This study has revealed that for a church to be effective and attract people, it has to be aware of these needs and be seen to address them, a requirement that Pentecostal churches seem to have mastered effectively.

The major factors that affect the ability of a church to address the needs of its members include the nature of worship, rigidity/flexibility in observing church procedures and bureaucratic governance controls, the depth and relevance of teachings/preaching, ability to identify and nurture young talents, and the existence and handling of disagreements within the church. Reliable spiritual guidance is also key in guiding members on right Christian living in addition to pastoral services, evangelism and publicity. These determine the attraction, satisfaction of members, and in effect, the movement choices they make.

Worship stood out as one of the most important aspects affecting churchgoers in both the Methodist and the Pentecostal denominations in the synod according to participants. Methodist participants expressed a desire for change to allow the Methodist Church members participate in a more vibrant worship, while those in

the Pentecostal churches criticised leaders of the MCK for being oblivious to this call.

Strict observance of structures and procedures as found in the Methodist Church is seen to hinder beneficial change, sticking to traditions and procedures that are perceived as retrogressive. The system is criticised for its rigidity and bureaucracy and is blamed for slow growth in the MCK. Its inability to accommodate and address current issues satisfactorily means the MCK loses out to the youthful enthusiastic Pentecostal churches where pastors shape their working program to benefits their congregants. On the other hand, governance structures and procedures constitute distinctive identity characteristics that make the MCK different from the Pentecostal churches. Additionally, they could be responsible for intact survival of the church while church schisms are a common occurrence in other denominations.

Teachings and sermons are meant to impart knowledge to believers to build a strong Christian foundation to empower them to observe Christian disciplines. Many Christians would like to hear the voice of God concerning their daily experiences, passed to them through their pastors/minister. Messages fulfilling this desire are always welcome and sought after, but Methodist ministers and preachers are perceived to be unconcerned. Pastoral care services are also key in the contemporary society where Christians are facing difficult socio-economic and religious challenges. Prayers, fellowships, and spiritual guidance demand availability of the pastor frequently. The young people who are prone to change churches sometimes do so when they feel ignored in their own church.

Disagreements are always a recipe for bad blood and this developed between church leaders and the youth in the Methodist Church due to a desire of the young people to introduce change. This misunderstanding created hostility that eventually pushed some youth out because they felt unaccepted. Outside preaching and publicity practiced by the Pentecostal churches played a positive role in evangelising and attracting people to church, in contrast to the MCK, which is less noted for its evangelism and publicity.

All the above factors have had noticeable impact on the Methodist Church and, according to participants, MCK has continued to lose its young people, leaving the older members and thus denying the church both human and material resources. Slow growth in numbers, and spiritual and developmental retardation are attributed to this outflow. In response, the Methodist Church is also perceived to have relaxed some of its procedures to accommodate some changes that have resulted in a more charismatic form of Christianity in many churches. This, however, is seen as *ad hoc*, rather than systematic. A far-reaching impact is the competition that has developed between denominations and their members. This has affected social interactions even outside the church. Relationship and friendships have strained and some have been lost. Finally, respondents see movements between churches as contributing to the production of weak Christians who are swayed by any wind of doctrine. This is caused by the confusion when one attends and listens to pastors from different denominations.

My empirical research has confirmed the perception that there is a trend of movement from the MCK to the Pentecostal churches, particularly among the youth. This trend is experienced by church members on the ground in Nyambene Synod. After presenting the main themes of their experience in this chapter, the following chapters interpret these findings further, bringing critical awareness of how my participants' experiences highlight deeper issues that are affecting the religious movements and changes experienced in Nyambene Synod. As a piece of practical theology, this thesis will then be able to offer a new perspective on the changing religious affiliations in Nyambene Synod and offer recommendations for the further reflection of the Methodist Church.

CHAPTER FIVE

FACTORS DETERMINING CHANGES IN RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS IN NYAMBENE SYNOD

5.0. Introduction

This Chapter discusses the findings of my empirical research into the factors that determine changes in church affiliations in Nyambene Synod by relating them to appropriate literature. In doing so, it endeavours to understand the interplay between Methodism and Pentecostalism in Nyambene Synod, and present an interpretative discussion of the reasons for denominational movement given by members of the Nyambene community of faith. My empirical research was conducted among Christians who have experienced the interaction between the two Christian traditions, and the data collected reveals that there is pronounced movement of Christians, especially the youth, from the Methodist Church to the Pentecostal churches in the Synod. While movement from one church to the other is a normal occurrence (Gez and Droz, 2017), the phenomenon under study has raised concerns because it is heavily inclined in one direction. In Nyambene Synod, and in Kenya more generally, church membership is important not only as an indication of growth but also as a source of financial strength to the churches concerned. The current trend, as experienced by respondents and captured in the research findings, tends to be from the Methodist Church to the Pentecostal churches in the region, raising a question as to why this is happening. It was noted, however, that a small number move from the Pentecostal churches to the Methodist Churches or within different churches of the same denomination. Gez and Droz (2017), in their article '*The Sheep Stealing Dilemma: the Ambiguities of Church Visits in Kenya*', attest to the existence of such movements and suggest that counter-movements are caused by disillusionment with the radicalism of the new churches that some may be unable to cope with it. One of my interviewees who moved back to the Methodist Church from a Pentecost church revealed that one of the reasons

he moved was to settle in a place where he could worship quietly with less of the drama found in the Pentecostal churches (IP02, 2019, p. 6).

By use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, I offer here my interpretation of how the research respondents themselves interpreted their experiences, which have been analysed in response to the research question. My analysis of empirical research data has generated three categories of conceptual considerations that I will discuss in this chapter in dialogue with relevant literature. Classification has been based on the themes recorded in the previous chapter and my own interpretations of the themes. While there are other themes that could be explored from this research, here I present the three that I consider important in answering the research question: personal issues, ecclesial identity and contextual relevance. These three concepts reflect contemporary issues in the integration of theology and practice in Nyambene Synod, as revealed by church members in their social religious and economic context. In the first category of personal issues, I examine the influence of modern consumer culture on individual decision making concerning their own spirituality and the exercise of freedom and authority to choose. The second consideration, that of ecclesial identity, involves the church's concept of itself vis-a-vis an outsider's perception, or how others understand it. The last category is the relevance of the church in contemporary society. What is the contribution of the church in relation to the needs and values of contemporary culture, particularly in consideration of the changes humanity is experiencing. Presenting these three themes here responds to the first research question, on the reasons for the growth of Pentecostalism, and the second question, on causes of changing religious affiliations.

5.1. Personal Issues

Listening to the respondents' perception of movements and choice of churches to affiliate with, it emerged that Christians choose a church depending on the services they received or which they could appropriate by virtue of being members. Although consumer culture is paradoxically individualistic and communitarian, as Gauthier (2017) contends, the classic view of consumerism is that it emphasised

personal interests more than communal ones. Thus, fulfilment of personal desires such as economic and social development, spiritual satisfaction and comfort among others tend to play an important role in influencing the contemporary changes taking place.

In recent decades, the world at large has undergone transforming effects on all areas of life, religion being one. As the '*Called to Love and Praise*' Methodist Church in Britain ecclesiological statement affirms, 'churches are part of fast changing pluralistic societies' (1999, p. 3). Globalization has played a major role in effecting changes that have affected human experiences globally (Bonsu and Belk 2010) making the contemporary world quite different from what it was fifty years back. Africa has similarly gone through transformation in the last two centuries and this affected virtually all aspects of life. In Kenya, as in other African countries, development of urban cities and towns has triggered rural to urban migration the rate of which, Gez (2018) says, is remarkable and sufficient to influence change, even though most Kenyans still live in the countryside. Statistics from the World Bank indicate that urbanization in Kenya increased from 23.18% of the total population in 2009, to 27.51% in 2019. Further, some communal and cultural values have been abandoned due to education and modernization, while the traditional organization of family life has been changed significantly (Oduyoye, 2017; Getui, 2017).

There has been immense exposure to enthusiastic charismatic preachers in high schools and colleges (which is a popular practice in Kenyan schools and colleges), and the MCK has been facing challenges as its preachers in schools were not able to match the enthusiasm of the Pentecostal church preachers (Nyabwari and Kagama, 2014). Additionally, Pentecostal churches preach and publicise their churches through the television sets in many middle-class homes, in public service institutions like hospitals, and in restaurants and public entertainment locations (Parsitau and Mwaura, 2010). This has brought church into homes and houses through televangelists who are mostly Pentecostal-oriented. It has therefore affected patterns of life, leisure and church experience. Not only did these changes create a much more secular society and culture but it has also challenged the

traditional mission churches that had dominated Kenyan religious space for decades (Gez, 2018). The entry of this vibrant Pentecostalism exacerbated the impact by shaking further the already fragile social foundations after the colonial breakdown of traditional patterns of community life and social systems (Gez, 2018). Indeed, the encounter between culture and faith brought by missionaries dismantled social systems that held people together, as Getui (2017) asserts, and left the people vulnerable. Gatu argues that the missionaries attempted to eradicate indigenous rituals, replacing them with church rituals that never satisfied the needs previously fulfilled by traditional religious rites and concepts of life leaving the Kenyan Christians with a gap that they strive continuously to fill (2006).

In effect, all these developments have exposed Kenyan Christians to varieties of faith practices and beliefs unlike in the past, when there were few expressions of Christian faith and limited knowledge due to a lack of exposure and the monopoly of the traditional mission churches. Education, for example, has enlightened many people, curtailing total reliance on preachers and pastors as the only source of Christian knowledge, since church members can read from Christian literature as well as listening to charismatic preachers on social media. Moreover, changes in the Kenyan society have come about from the freedom and independence gained when young people join institutions of learning and leave the control of their parents. They are then able to make independent decisions concerning their lives, including their spirituality. Husemann and Eckhardt argue that today's world is so liquid and so fast that it is difficult to stop for reflection (2019, p. 391). This is coupled with a desire that effectively produces a generation that is searching for fulfilment, whether spiritual or material. IPO2 (2019, p.2) confirms this as he observed that people are bound to keep moving, since some of them do not even know what they are searching for. Contemporary individual Christians form their own religious perspectives and practices, not based on the normative practices and beliefs of their religious institutions, but relying on a wide range of unofficial resources, some not even recognised by their institutions (Gez, 2018, p.35). Such traditional churches and institutions have lost their dominance and Gez further argues that 'in modernity religious affiliation should be recognised as the inevitable

outcome of individual choice' (2018, p.36). This is in contrast to what happened earlier when one joined the church/denomination of his/her parents, or just affiliated with the church close to their place of residence.

5.1.1. Spiritual Consumerism

Using the concept of spiritual consumerism, this section explores how this capitalistic Western lifestyle is reshaping religion by influencing the contemporary worshipper in making choices they deem essential to them. Spiritual consumerism implies religious practices where an individual Christian plays the role of a buyer who makes a decision whether or not to consume or make use of the services provided. Husemann and Eckhardt define consumer spirituality as 'the interrelated practices and processes that people engage in when consuming market offerings (products, services, places) that yield spiritual utility' (2019, p. 393). The consumer who is looking for a fulfilling spiritual experience now becomes key in determining the quality of services offered in the religious marketplace. Consumerism is not unique to Christianity, but is widespread in contemporary society in general; since Christians are part of the society, agents of social change tend to affect them. Social life is filled with consumer tendencies such that publicity and branding is seen everywhere including the Pentecostal churches who make every effort to advertise their churches (Gauthier, 2017). Spiritual consumerism stands on three key elements. These are: the consumer/believer who is seeking a fulfilling spiritual experience, the provider/seller who is offering the service and the marketplace/church where the two (buyer and seller) meet for the transaction to take place (see Huseman and Eckhardt, 2019). This has been much influenced by capitalism, which originates from a Western perspective that favours privatization and competitive markets where wealthy individuals make key decisions.

This concept is not only foreign to Kenya but is also in contrast with the communal kind of life that was originally African. I use the spiritual/religious marketplace to represent a scenario where religion/churches/denominations are perceived as displaying products or goods in a marketplace for sale. In his work on *Sociological Narratives and the Sociology of Pentecostalism*, Wilkinson offers an argument for

a religious market model, or rational choice theory, where he argues that changes taking place in society and in religion are not necessarily indications of a decline in Christianity but of a shift in religious providers which in effect triggers a demand for a paradigm revision. He further maintains that the demand for religion in society is always high but that providers change (2014, p.224); he is applying the concept of supply and demand where demand controls supply. Depending on the demand, a shift is witnessed from the old providers (institutionalised mainline churches) to the contemporary self-styled churches that, according to Droz, display 'self-fashioned beliefs and individual religious makeup' (2018, p. 36). Flexibility that is a feature of Pentecostal churches allows them to change in response to the demands of their targeted clients and this implies a kind of a temporary attitude to religion. Thus consumers shape the kind of religion they want while on the other hand they are affected and shaped by the contemporary consumer culture.

The responses to my research interviews confirm the argument of Bonsu and Belk that 'the diversity of religious options allow for a quasi-market where consumers may fashion religion into any combination of values and doctrines' (2010, p.310). Since the purpose of the market is to satisfy consumers' expectations, providers may have to comply as they seek sustainability of their churches. Services, as Husemann and Eckhardt contend, 'are purposely designed to enhance consumers' spiritual wellbeing and actualize their spiritual experience' (2019, p. 392). There is, then, an interplay between the market and consumption where it becomes inevitable to mix spiritual and material products. Husemann and Eckhardt emphasise the need to note 'how marketers sacralise their products and brands with spiritual meanings to increase attractiveness' (2019, p. 392) and that this in return attracts customer/consumers as in a spiritual business setting, what is commonly referred to as 'religious commercialization' in Kenya (Gez, 2019). Although the MCK has traditionally been resistant to such commercialization, there is increased indication that it might need to consider adaptation, since its contemporary worshippers are not only young and modernized but they are constantly calling for change as revealed by the empirical research. Bowen argues that 'Christianity in Africa has to adapt or perish' (2007, p.140). Consumerism has thus influenced

change in religious institutions and practices as it instigates freedom and authority to choose as was demonstrated by empirical research participants. ‘I feel, personally, I feel I need some backup. Spiritual backup from somewhere else. That is where you realize now you find one attending meetings outside the church’ IP06, (2019. P.2).

5.1.2. Consumerism and prosperity

It is important at this point to note that spiritual consumerism is not synonymous with a prosperity gospel. A prosperity gospel, which is also known as theology of prosperity, gospel of prosperity, health and wealth gospel or faith gospel (Parsitau, 2014), teaches that ‘prosperity of all kinds including good health is the right of every Christian to claim. It is attributed to one’s generous giving to the proponents of the prosperity gospel who are also founders of these churches’ (Gifford, 2009, p.375). While spiritual consumerism and prosperity gospel are not the same, they are nevertheless related, and both seem to flow from wider consumerism in culture. Although an attempt by the providers to satisfy the spiritual desires of their clients might lead to exaggerated practices like faking miracles, it is usually the wish of the consumer to receive genuine rather than fraudulent services. Contextual teachings (which I discuss later in the chapter), for example, can be seen to border on prosperity, especially when they are done to address current issues and promise miraculous deliverance from disease, poverty, joblessness and other oppressive situations. The popular prosperity gospel of Pentecostal churches could be resulting from capitalist ideas that have infiltrated the church.

5.1.3. Consumerism and Freedom of Choice

Choices are only possible with the availability of various options to choose from and the freedom to choose, and therefore the coming of Pentecostalism to the Kenyan religious landscape provided fresh diversity and opportunity. Contemporary Christians are thus presented with a ‘marketplace’ of churches and denominations and with the individual autonomy to choose, Wilkinson (2014) notes, such individuals are likely to choose based on spirituality rather than on religious institution. Respondent IPO6 agreed with this and said that his choice is

determined by the services that a particular Pentecostal church offers, not necessarily its name or orientation. IPO2 stated clearly that his expectation from a church is to grow in knowledge of God through his word, and to get spiritual nourishment and fellowship (2019, p.1). Armed with these expectations, he looked around and identified a church that he believed would meet these requirements. In this case, he then became a consumer of spiritual services and picked the best provider based on his perceived needs.

Consumerism in contemporary society involves what Wilkinson describes as ‘personal spiritual authority as opposed to doctrine, church, religious leaders or historical/traditional elements’ (2014, p. 229). An individual Christian’s spiritual desires dictate the choices they make so that he/she selects from a variety of religious beliefs and practices. In this case, therefore, I argue that individual freedom and choices have played a role in religious affiliation in Nyambene Synod as opposed to communal concerns. Contemporary worshippers, unlike those ~~in a~~ of the previous generations, who had strong communal attachment with the church, do not today feel obliged to protect and maintain church traditions and doctrines. Instead, they look upon the church as a spiritual service provider and go there to get spiritual nourishment. If they are not satisfied, they can always shift to another one, as was noted by Gez and Droz (2017) in their research in Kenya. Parsitau (2011) and Oduyoye (2017) are also of this view. The consumer-provider analogy clarifies my research findings where participants, in explaining movements and consequent affiliations in the Synod, cited reasons that could be interpreted as driven by personal preferences in spiritual matters. In response to a question as to what he would like to gain from going to church, IPO4 says,

When I want to go to church mostly, I want to have an experience of worship. Worshipping God in an environment where we are practising the word of God and also in an environment where I will encounter true spiritual leadership, and also to get the true word which is inspired of God, which is able to transform my life and make me to be close to God (2019, p. 1).

Since this is a participant who had grown up in the Methodist Church and moved to a Pentecostal church, his statement would mean that he gradually grew uncomfortable in MCK because worship there was not up to his expectation. He

was also looking for what he calls inspired, transformative words and spiritual leadership, implying that he did not get these in MCK. This supposedly list of demands/requirements require a supplier who can understand, interpret and satisfy them. Therefore, IP04 looked for a church that would provide these demands. Here the autonomy of the individual Christian and their inclinations towards his/her spiritual wellbeing is put above the norms of a religious organization. This is seen where people leave a well-established Methodist Church to join a small Pentecostal church operating in a hired room and with no history/records to inform the individual. Indeed, interviewee IP04 held important leadership positions in the Methodist Church prior to his moving out to start his own church. Regardless of how much his mother church needed his services, he still left to satisfy personal needs that he felt the Methodist Church was unable or not keen to meet. This is a demonstration of the waning importance of institutional loyalty and denominational boundaries by the current generation of Christians in favour of what Gez and Droz call ‘lifestyle preferences’ (2017, p.6).

5.1.4. Consumerism and Church-Hopping

The words of IP06, a 23-year-old youth who has moved to a number of Pentecostal churches and back to the Methodist Church in the last four years, clearly demonstrate the practice and the force behind his mobility. While admitting that he still seeks services from Pentecostal churches, he reveals that the driving factor is the services offered in those churches that match his expectations. He says attending both churches, or many churches at the same time, is not commendable, even though it may be inevitable:

I can't say it is a good practice but you are forced to. Actually, you don't go to any church because it's a Pentecostal church. Maybe after identifying there is something that you need that is found there. You don't just go and enter into a church saying it's a Pentecostal church... but at times you are forced because of the interest (2019, p.5).

The practice of seeking services from several churches concurrently is common in the Kenyan religious field, which I consider attuned to consumer spirituality as Christians keep ‘shopping’ around for a service of their type. In their research in Urban Kenya and their article *The Sheep Stealing Dilemma: the Ambiguities of*

Church Visits in Kenya, Gez and Droz found that many Christians find it easy to experiment with different religious affiliations before settling on one, or they may even attend several religious institutions concurrently (2017, p.6). In situations where individuals bow to pressure not to leave, they may decide to hold on to their mother church (such as MCK) while seeking spiritual satisfaction elsewhere to complement what they do not get from 'home'. This view is demonstrated by IP06 who stated clearly, 'I may not go and leave the church again, I will never do that but I will continue attending maybe where I hear there is a conference, yea attending those things but still in the church' (2019, p.5). Others do this as they search for 'a better option' and they eventually settle in the one they feel meets their needs. However, the challenge of attending several religious institutions or churches concurrently is that the practice may not be maintained for long and shared loyalty tends to favour one at the expense of the other. It is only a matter of time before one settles in one of the many, as demonstrated by the experience of IP03, a former Methodist member and now a musician in the Pentecostal church. He entertained young people severally from a Methodist church as they visited to experience his music before going to worship in their church, but they eventually were convinced by him to stay in his Pentecostal church.

...in the last six or five months, I received almost four youths from here, this church to my church...they tell me that before we go to our church, we pass here, we get experience of your music, and now we proceed to our church...because we don't have such music in our church...and I told them I think since the lamb of God was sacrificed...we were given freedom to worship so if you feel like joining us you guys do. And some of them have done so, some others are afraid (IP03, 2019, P.6).

5.1.5. Consumerism and Neo-Liberalism

Neo-liberalism, an ideology that emphasises the free market and competition (Gauthier, 2017), has played a role in the changes taking place in the Kenyan socio-religious environment. Spiritual consumerism has further been promoted by changes that have affected the religious environment in Kenya in recent decades, as Gez and Droz argue (2017, p.5). Christianity in Kenya has been forced to swiftly respond to the enlightenment brought about by modernity (Miller and Yamamori, 2007), socio-economic currents and political wind of change (Parsitau, 2011).

National politics and policy changes have influenced Kenyan religious transformation; most notable is the change from a one-party to a multiparty system of government in 1990, which promoted democratisation including the liberation of markets and media freedom (Gez and Droz, 2017). The registering of new churches was eased (Parsitau, 2011; Gez and Droz, 2017) and this in effect saw the upsurge of numerous neo-Pentecostal style churches all over the country. According to Gathogo (2011), by 2010, there were ten thousand churches registered in Kenya and many more applications being processed. This indicates a huge increase from the figure popularly cited of 8520 registered and 6740 more applications pending according to a newspaper article of 2007 (Gez and Droz, 2017). They further reckon that many Pentecostal-oriented churches are not registered yet, while most of those on the waiting list are Pentecostals.

The religious market in Nyambene, like other parts of Kenya, is becoming crowded, with numerous expressions (churches) on offer, and this has posed a challenge to the traditional mainline churches. Their monopoly was challenged and Christians did not have to accept their traditional worship any more since they had found alternatives with ‘better’ or ‘modern’ or ‘more spiritual’ services as they are commonly known. The options available include the Pentecostal churches whose pastors ‘are progressively creating more flexible youth-driven frameworks’ (Counted, 2012, p.1), which are attractive to the young Kenyan Christians. Competition ensued which affects all the mainline churches as they struggle to retain their members. Unlike the mainline churches, Pentecostal pastors (as Gez confirmed in his research in Kenya) do not study theology to enable them to start a church, rather participants point out that the only requirement is a Bible and a suit (2019; Gez and Droz, 2017). However, despite their ‘lack of seminary training or any other theological education, they are market-savvy and often grow extremely large churches’ (Miller and Yamamori, 2007, p.26). They seem to understand the demands of different categories of their clients and work hard to provide them at all cost, because this is the way to retain them for the survival of their churches. Miller and Yamamori reiterate that these pastors know the importance attached to the Holy Spirit and ‘they embrace the reality of the Holy Spirit but package the religion in a

way that makes sense to culturally attuned teens and young adults, as well as upward mobile people who did not grow up in the Pentecostal tradition' (2007, p. 27).

Respondents expressed a strong indication that their desire to exploit and utilize their talents in serving drove them out of their original churches since this opportunity was not provided. They waited for the church to open up opportunities for them in order to develop their talents, but this was not forthcoming and their attempts were resisted. IP03, a 29-year old who had left the Methodist church four years before this interview, claimed that his effort to utilize his music skills in MCK was blocked. 'Like me my real reason of moving from Methodist Church or MCK church to a Pentecostal church. One of the reasons was the lack of opportunity. Like me, I am gifted in music. I am talented, I am a musician' (2019, p.2). This response has used 'I am' and 'me' several times, an indication of the centrality of the personal preferences of this participant as opposed to the needs of the church. He seemed quite excited to tell the story of his current Pentecostal church that had accommodated him and even paid him to use his skills. It is evident, as Gez noted, that since individual believers have power and are 'free to leave at any time and join a competing denomination, congregants cannot be taken for granted by religious institutions' (2018, p.125). While this borders on individualism that can be seen as selfish, there were participants who moved due to personal reasons that were still selfless; take, for example, the motive of IP06. He claims to have left MCK 'because I felt like...I am not really exploiting what is in me...the chances of serving God where I was were very minimal and I really wanted to do that. I really wanted to help young people' (2019, p.5). As the Methodist Church and other mainline churches fail to pay close attention to the demands of their congregants, the Pentecostal churches are loosening up the liturgical rigidity and offering a free and flexible system to accommodate wide range of needs and demands in competitive marketplace.

As noted earlier, the majority of the congregants affected by mobility are the youth. This is partly because most of the African population consists of young people with almost forty-five percent below fifteen years, and over 50%, 18 years and below.

This is the case in both church and society (Mombo, 2017, p.382, Gitau, 2017). The other reason for the moving of the youth is that the mainline churches have not provided space to accommodate their youthful spirit in a way that makes them feel involved in their church. As such Mombo further says the young people ‘are tired of waiting to be involved in the destinies of their lives’ (2017, p.383). Respondent IP05 shared an experience where leaders in his church tried to investigate why their youth were inclined towards Pentecostal churches. He said ‘before even they understood the reason as to why we did that, some of the leaders decided that the reason as to why the youth want to join other churches, it is because of the public address system...’(2019, p.4). The leaders want to do a lot for them (youth), but not *with* them, and so they feel left out.

Due to these social changes and recent economic hard times, Christians are seeking more for meaning and answers to the challenges they face. The need for constant reassurance by pastors/ministers is growing by the day. As IP02 pointed out ‘some go to church because they need to have their needs addressed or the men of God speaking over their lives’ (IP02, 2019, p.4). Thus, the holistic approach of some Pentecostal churches can be appealing to such people as they pay attention to spiritual, physical and social needs of both individuals and community. (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). While this has been seen as a domineering practice and pastors are accused of running the church as a private business (Gez, 2018; Gez and Droz, 2019), IP04 applauds the practice by Pentecostal pastors for offering their members ‘spiritual fatherhood’ as he calls it.

He will meet your spiritual needs, he will attend to your social needs, he will attend to your kind of development needs, attend to your family, attend to the needs that are actually outside the spiritual needs. Because this person is there for you’ (IP04, 2019, p.6).

He emphasises that this pastoral attention by the pastor is very important because it makes the church feel like home. The pastor is available throughout to address his members’ issues. This is unlike the Methodist Church, where a minister may be caring for as many as ten congregations. In this case, he/she may only offer congregational services while individual issues remain unattended. One interviewee expressed his frustration of looking for his minister in vain in order to share his

challenges. ‘...when you are oppressed maybe there are some things you want to ask or you would want this servant of God to serve you...you don’t get this kind of service (IP05, 2019. p.5). For a generation that is seeking spiritual fulfilment and supernatural settlement of their daily encounters, there is increasing desire to access a marketplace that promises spiritual transcendence (Husemann and Eckhardt, 2019). To meet this need, there is a growing attention to congregants and their demands (Gez, 2018, p.124) and a heightened spirit of competition is witnessed between different denominations as they compete for affiliates.

It is noted therefore that unmet personal expectations have played a key role in determining the behaviour of people in choosing a church to worship as they respond to the consumer society ethos. The Methodist Church has not satisfactorily met the expectations of her members, particularly the youth, forcing them to look elsewhere for fulfilment. Mombo supports this in her discussion of the involvement of youth in mission and evangelism in the Kenyan church. She contends that ‘what to do for the youth and how to engage them in the changes that they require is a question not yet answered’ (2017, p.382). Making decisions concerning the young people without consulting them (as respondents have cited) makes them disown those decisions and continue to feel ignored by their own churches. In a paper on *Youth in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches and Factors Accounting for their Attraction to Pentecostalism*, Counted (2012) argues that there is a disconnection between efforts and the understanding of the youth’s needs. Despite the attempts by the traditional mission churches to mitigate the problem, the youth continue to feel excluded and ignored while the Pentecostal churches seemingly give them the voice and platform they desire. Tambiyi supports the argument and adds that ‘youths represent one of the greatest challenges and one of the greatest unmet needs in the church today’ (2014, p.3). Since they feel excluded, there is no sense of ownership and loyalty to their churches making it easy to leave and easy to get into a church of their choice in the marketplace.

5.1.6. Evaluating Consumerism

Other than affecting the changes in religious affiliations, the novel spiritual consumerism has also transformed the religious field in terms of practice, beliefs and attitudes. A reflection of effect of this mobility on the Methodist Church is discussed in the next chapter but I will here highlight considerations for the potential challenges as well as the impact of consumerism in religion in Kenya. First, spiritual consumerism locates the person of the believer at the centre of all that is done. This risks compromising the Christocentric practice of Christianity. This argument will form part of the theological reflection in the next chapter. Spiritual consumerism puts the needs of the individual above all else but it can ignore the institution of the church and why the church exists. While contemporary churchgoers increasingly question the supremacy and hegemony of traditional church leaders and structures, there is need to practice church democracy with caution. In his research in urban Kenya, Gez discovered that for the survival and progress of some Pentecostal churches and movements, pastors have started consulting congregants in the form of questionnaires about what kind of messages they would like to hear, so that church members determine the ‘good news’ they need to hear (2018, p.124). When going to church aims at affirming one’s self-actualization, this overrules the theological purpose of the church and promotes individual interests above the call of God to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such an attitude may not foster genuine worship which, in addition to attending to the worshippers needs, should promote a dialogue between the individual and the understanding of faith (Schreiter, 1985).

Secondly, the over-commercialized religious marketplace may hinder a genuine spiritual experience (Husemann and Eckhardt, 2019, p.392). This is perhaps the reason why, though acknowledging the exponential growth of Pentecostalism, Parsitau (2011) cautions that this enthusiasm does not necessarily translate into growth in spirituality and transformation in Kenya. Pentecostal pastors have also been accused of using unethical means to satisfy their followers’ clamour for miracles (see Gitau, 2017) while some mainline church leaders and pastors have given a blind eye to wrong practices to ensure member retention (Gez, 2018, p.50). These individualistic drives run contrary to a church institution which is not

conceived as a means of achieving individual satisfaction. The temporary structures of Pentecostalism do not promote the moral social cohesiveness that characterise the traditional churches and provided a strong foundation that can withstand forces of damaging change (Gauthier, 2017)

Criticism of particular churches and members and spirited efforts to outdo one another bring about competition that poses a serious challenge to the unity of the church as a body of Christ. This hinders one from noticing the good practices and qualities of a church and tends to put emphasis on what he/she perceives as a weakness in that particular church. It could contribute to many denominations disassociating themselves with ecumenism, especially the Pentecostal-oriented Christians in Kenya. The fourth century Nicene Creed described the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic (BMC, 1999, p.4), a foundational tradition that the church holds key even today. The Pentecostal practice of spiritual consumerism, that puts an individual over and above other Christian values, clearly stands in tension with the essence of Christian faith: the unity and oneness of the church. The church needs to be one as it serves and worships one God and if it is not united, it cannot reflect the oneness of God who also is the source and basis of its holiness. Similarly, the Catholicity of the church reflects the very nature of God who created and loves all without partiality, a virtue Christians need to exhibit in faithfulness to Christ and scriptures. With self-preferences influencing decisions, it obliterates the position of Christ and others in one's Christian practice. Individual centred faith means individuals speak to the church rather than the church speaking salvation to the individual (Gez 2018, p.124), so that church itself becomes subsidiary to individual satisfaction.

On the other hand, this spiritual consumerism has revitalised the service delivery of the older churches as they get in touch with the reality of their lost monopoly and the existence of an open market (Gez, 2018). The Methodist Church is challenged to consider softening her stance especially on rigid observance of traditional church laws and allowing space for Christians to experience and express faith the way they understand. While I do not propose compromise, these seem to be some of the features (goods) consumers may be looking for, to which

MCK needs to offer a response. Additionally, if the Methodist Church has to serve effectively in the midst of a contemporary consumer society that piles demands on the church, it has to distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of the world, it has to ‘evaluate the voices and discern the spirit’ (Beck, 2017). This is because the church must not conform to the contemporary demands but rather it has to maintain its holy distance while perpetuating the kingdom of God in the world.

As revealed above, spiritual consumerism is one of the characteristics of the Pentecostal churches that accounts for much of their success since it appeals to the young contemporary generation. Additionally, it has triggered changes in affiliation because those who focus on their own preferences and requirements tend to join the Pentecostal churches that provide their needs. However, I note that, since churches are social institutions, personal desires are not sufficient reasons for ecclesial belonging; therefore, in the next section we turn to further issues pertaining to ecclesial identity and contextual factors that featured in the empirical research.

5.2.0. Ecclesial Identity

Ecclesial identity here refers to how the church sees itself on the basis of scripture and tradition (its self-understanding), in relation to how it is understood by others who are outside it (Avis, 2018), the characteristics that distinguish it, and also its position or the image it portrays within the culture and society where it is situated. The question of the identity of the Methodist Church has arisen because of the experienced mobility that has raised issues regarding its perception as a church. My research interviewees often seem to be questioning the performance of MCK using evaluation tools that they have set for themselves, such that they move away when the church according to them fail to meet their expectations. This means that MCK has to examine itself in the light of how it presents itself and what it stands for, in light of the perceptions and expectations of others. In turn, though, we must ask how others judge a church’s performance and what they understand as the key purpose of a church. Is their understanding based on their expectations, and do their expectations shape the characteristics of a church? This seems to be the case, as we

have seen in 5.1 above that the consumer may determine the service provided and Pentecostal churches tend to seek to please the worshippers. My research interviews also revealed that my participants' understanding of what a church is and their expectations about a church affected the decisions and choices they make. Therefore, I reflect here on the appropriate sources of ecclesial identity. Research participants seem to have tagged the church with their specifications of what it should be and offer. The understanding of what a church is from the Methodist point of view differs from a Pentecostal perception of what church is, particularly in the modern society that is undergoing significant social changes.

Church identity could be discussed from several perspectives including its origin, mission, governance and authority, unity and diversity, liturgy and sacraments, as Avis (2018) argues. For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to emphasise those that are relevant to my research question: what contributes to the changes in religious affiliation in relation to the interaction between Methodism and Pentecostalism in Nyambene Synod. The key features of identity that answer the research question and are of interest to Nyambene's community of faith as the two denominations interact are: the four marks of the church (One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic traditions), Christian Fellowship and Community, Connexionalism and Church Organization.

Before I discuss the nature of the Methodist Church in Kenya under the features above, I need to build a foundation upon which these characteristics are based. My reflection is, of course, upon the Methodist Church and the Pentecostal churches and how the two are perceived and how they have interacted and influenced one another in Nyambene Synod. It would be insufficient to discuss the identity of the Methodist Church in Kenya without making reference to the origins of Methodism in Britain in the 18th century from where MCK originated. This helps in understanding the Methodist origin and heritage, which is traced to the Wesleyan movement of the 18th century. I also draw on substantial literature from European authors in this aspect because there is little written literature about MCK that is independent of the BMC literature and history. Thus, the MCK still maintains considerably dependence on its mother church. However, as I draw much of the

MCK identity from BMC, I still acknowledge MCK's practices and interpretations of its valued and observed identity characteristics from an insider's point of view as a researcher and a practitioner. This research therefore will benefit from my heuristic knowledge and experience (Bennett et al. 2018; Denscombe, 2007).

5.2.1. Origin of the MCK and its Identity

The Methodist Church is a mission church that was started in Kenya in 1862 by British Methodist Church (BMC) missionaries, while the Pentecostal churches and movements, particularly the most recent form of Pentecostals (the Neo-Pentecostals that I researched) are less than thirty years old in the region. Methodist Church traditions and governance structures were inherited from the mother church in Britain. Today, there is considerable continuity and uniformity as the MCK faithfully adheres to these inherited traditions. From its inception, the Methodist Church in Kenya was run and managed by missionaries as an overseas District of the British Conference until 1967, when it gained autonomy (Nthamburi, 1982). As one of the missionary churches in Kenya, the Methodist Church imitated most aspects of its home churches, their traditions, liturgy and polity. This imitation did not end with the achievements of autonomy but, rather, church leaders have continued to perpetuate the same characteristics to date. As discussed later in this chapter, this is one of the reasons these churches are losing their relevance in the societies where they are established. Missionary influence still lives within the Kenyan mainline churches to date and this has not only contributed to their increasing challenge of irrelevance, but also their slow growth and expansion. This is not only because they keep the structures inherited from the missionaries, but also because they have not developed contextual spiritual and social perspectives that would give meaning to those structures in the contemporary society. MCK has also not been innovative to continue developing and upgrading the structures to meet the current missional need of its people. The Methodist Church still maintains the *status quo*, failing to use its autonomy to initiate changes and adaptations that would serve its people well in fulfilment of its mission mandate. Some research participants expressed their understanding that MCK resists change although they still feel it can offer better theologically articulated direction if it was willing to do

so. While MCK holds unto its traditions to protect its identity, its dissatisfied members seek alternatives in the Pentecostal churches that are less traditional and structural.

The Methodist Church in Kenya's identity can be understood from the church's doctrinal standards. MCK understands itself to be part of the wider church of Christ in the world – one, holy, catholic and apostolic. It plays its role of mission in the fulfilment of the great commission 'to make disciples of all nations' (Mathew 28:19). According to the Methodist Standing Orders, the MCK is understood as '...a communion of believers called and ordained by God to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ holistically in order to transform people's lives in Kenya and throughout the world' (MCK, 2015, p.3). This is in line with the understanding of John Wesley, who regarded his movement as 'raised by God to spread scriptural Holiness throughout the land' (MCB, 1999, p.34). The nature of the Methodist Church as seen around the world 'has been shaped by its origins in the Church of England as a holiness movement with a universal missionary horizon' as Chapman (2018, p.317) contends. To achieve this mission, MCK uses scripture and tradition as its theological framework but also acknowledges its role in connecting believers into a fellowship within the body of Christ. This is reflected in the MCK doctrinal standards recorded in its Standing Orders and Agenda (2015). A combination of characteristics may provide an attempt to define the Methodist Church in Kenya noting that most of these elements are shared with other Methodists throughout the world (Abraham, 2019).

5.2.2. One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic

Therefore, 'the Methodist Church claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church, which is the Body of Christ' (MCK, 2015, p.3). In doing this, the Methodist Church professes the marks of the church found in the fourth century ecumenical Nicene Creed as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic (BMC, 1999). As Chapman argues, in his work *Methodism and the Church*, Methodists have developed their own interpretation of what it means to believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church (2018, p.323), an interpretation that has caused tension

between the Methodist and churches that hold to different understandings. In essence, the Methodist Church's understanding was guided by its practical considerations (Koskela, 2011, p.38) of holy living in the community and its commitment to live out its apostolic calling of mission. On oneness, the Methodist Church believes that the church exists in a state of unity based on its common ministry although it may not agree on issues such as the episcopacy. On holiness, all are called to live a holy life based on God's gift of holiness and grace as they are in fellowship with God and one another. The church is aware of the moral corruption of both clergy and laity and yet believes that the church is on the way to perfection through the gracious gift of holiness from God (Koskela 2011; Chapman, 2018), as emphasised by its founder Wesley. The Methodist Church perceives itself to be 'a gathering of believers or would-be believers called to holiness in response both to the apostolic tradition and their own fresh developing Christian experience' (BMC, 1999, p.39). This resonates with the Pentecostal beliefs and practices, although Christians in Nyambene perceive the Pentecostal churches as a better option rather than a different expression of the same faith. Catholicity is perceived as the universal community of Christians, where the gospel embraces all, everywhere, and in every time and culture. The universal love of God is emphasised by the Methodists as they recognise – as Wesley did – that Christ loved all and died for all (Beck 2018).

On apostolicity, the Methodist Church, though upholding and professing the four ecumenical marks of the church, did not fully accept the notion that apostolic succession in the historic episcopate is necessary for ecclesiology (Koskela, 2011, p.36). Wesley defended the necessity of ecclesial ordination but rejected uninterrupted episcopal succession – a perspective that is still espoused by contemporary Methodists worldwide. The Methodist Church in Kenya similarly uphold episcopal ordination but as a continuation of the apostolic mission not a succession in the historic and visible church. Methodists seek to interpret apostolicity as continuity in the apostolic mission and to live the apostolic faith (Chapman 2018, p.385; Koskela, 2011, p.31). Pentecostals tend to believe in a

direct apostolic mandate, where emphasis is placed on being sent by God to minister holiness to the world, rather than received teachings and doctrines of faith.

5.2.3. Christian Fellowship and Community

The Methodist Church has always valued its social aspect, or fellowship. It began from small fellowship groups (societies) within the Anglican Church in Britain. John Wesley emphasised ‘fellowship, discipline and rootedness of Christian living in daily life’ (BMC, 1999, p 40), where daily life and the experiences of believers is lived in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is apparent that the church valued holiness, revelation, fellowship, Christian experience and tradition in its endeavour to live and spread the gospel of Christ or scriptural holiness. These values and practices are not unique to the Methodist Church and they are unlikely to cause tension with other denominations. However, while this is the self-perception of the Methodist Church, my empirical research shows that many people feel they are only theoretical for Methodists. Similarly, the Pentecostal churches’ emphasis on holiness, fellowship, experience and revelation is perceived to better fulfil the Methodist Church’s foundational beliefs and practices.

Pentecostalism is thus influencing change to both the Methodist Church and general population as Nyabwari and Kagama (2014) argue, and this is supported by the findings of this empirical research. Pentecostalism is providing a more satisfying outworking of the original Methodist commitment to transformation Christian community. Research participant IP03 confirms that Christian fellowship is fundamental and affected his decision to join a Pentecostal church. ‘First is to be in a fellowship...because fellowship is one of the basic of a Christian...that you be in fellowship with the rest of the Christians’ (2019, p.1). No doubt diminishing of Christian fellowship in the MCK Nyambene Synod has weakened its ecclesial purpose and thus challenged its relevance in the community. Communal aspects of the Methodist Church are also dwindling as people adjust to individual and private living.

Methodism was originally a movement within an institutional church and it existed only because members were held together by common ideologies and spiritual

aims. Their purpose was to live a life of holiness and spread scriptural holiness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. John Wesley did not found a church but a movement. Therefore, issues of church identity did not arise then and were not considered and this has remained a weakness within the Methodist Church, as its ecclesial foundation remains unclear. This may explain the difference in form and practice found in different Wesleyan traditions around the world. Some of these varieties and divisions originated in Britain immediately Wesley died and the movement organised itself into a church (Haley and Francis, 2006). The MCK however focuses on continuity with its own traditions and governance in a pragmatic response to God's call of serving, more than emphasising the apostolic succession.

5.2.4. Connexionalism

The other unique feature of the Methodist Church is its connexionalism, an antithesis of congregationalism. Connexionalism is a system 'where each part is connected to every other in a mutually interdependent nature derived from the participation of all Christians through Christ in the very life of God himself' (BMC, 1999, 4.6.1). The connexional principle spells the relatedness of all levels of governance in the Methodist Church although the local churches, circuits, and synods exercise high degrees of autonomy. At the same time, they depend on the larger whole for their continuity while their autonomy is limited in the light of the needs of the whole church (BMC, 1999, 4.6.2). For some, this ecclesial feature of the Methodist Church is considered a hindrance to church progress, particularly where autonomy is limited since connexionalism requires interdependence among all levels of the church for their strength and growth. IP04 asserts that Pentecostal pastors who are autonomous are able to grow their churches while Methodist churches in the same vicinity continue to struggle to survive: '...in a Pentecostal movement, a pastor of a local congregation is seen as the vision carrier of that local congregation...he can go very far without being checked' (2019, p.5). Congregationalism, which is the polity of most Pentecostal churches, is here compared with the corporate nature of MCK and respondents seem to prefer the freedom exercised by the Pentecostal pastors compared to their Methodist

counterparts. This so-called lack of autonomy in MCK is actually an important aspect of the continuity that is essential for the church and at the same time, it entails a sufficient but limited freedom at their different levels of management (Chapman 2018). It also helps to check the unrestricted freedom that is common in the Pentecostal churches and the exploitation that may result from unchecked power. Methodist organization and governance structures stem from the Wesleyan movement of the eighteenth century that started as small cell groups or societies, developed into churches and later into the Methodist denomination. This organization (local church, circuit, synod and conference) explains the connexional and corporate nature of the Methodist Church. This Methodist heritage is held and protected by most elderly Methodists, but has become somewhat contentious, as interview participants referred to the strict observance of procedures, and blamed it for insensitivity and hindrance to change. As noted earlier, the wind of change in society may not leave the church unscathed since members of the church are still the same ones experiencing the effects of global changes. In their desire to change, young Christians collide with the older Christians who see the need to protect and hold on the church traditions, systems and procedures (*status quo*). A friction develops between the two groups causing the youths to go to a church that accommodate modern and youth-friendly practices easily (Counted, 2012). Participant IP04 highlights several reasons for dissatisfaction ranging from lack of freedom of worship, control of church life and even expression of gifts and ideas.

The spirituality bit of Methodist, it has a number of elements, which kind of puts a person under checks in terms of what we are calling worship...in raising a church in Methodist, the autonomy is so much checked, the government of Methodist is very systematic. You may not propagate an original idea very easily. (2019, p.5)

This is an indication that this group would like to take full control of the nature and governance of the church, which would mean changing most of the identifiable characteristics of the church. In fact, Lenna, in his analysis of *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, a Catholic theologian, provides a helpful way of understanding the Methodist ecclesiological challenges. He describes the tension between the youthful force of change and the *status quo* proponents as a chasm between progressive and conservative worldviews which manifest in diverse issues that may

not necessarily be genuine and sustainable (2011, p.2). These issues are likely to keep on changing as the rest of the world changes and this is why some of my participants noted that even though the Methodist Church is changing and allowing singing of choruses in the services, and perhaps altering the procedures a little, the youth still leave.

They have reasons as to why they move from Methodist to Pentecost churches. One of the reason is the way we conduct our services, though we have improved. But before, and even now, there are some areas that make them or encourage them to move (IP01, 2019, P.1).

Further, Lenna suggests that ‘to understand the specificity of intra-church disputes, it must be remembered that until recent times, it was changelessness which was popularly regarded as one of the church’s hallmarks’ (2011, p.2). However, as available literature has demonstrated in chapter two, traditional mission churches have been experiencing pressure and sometimes schisms that resulted to development of the AICs, the African Initiated Pentecostal churches and the east African Revival Movement. We acknowledge that changing of churches or “church-hopping” was not common until recently, but today, as Bowen (2007) argues, people do not pursue what is true or right but what is relevant and useful in their own individual situations. While we bear this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that neither rigidity nor flexibility of the fundamental characteristics of the church can provide a fully acceptable solution for all. Changing churches is likely to continue and new expressions of Christianity will emerge since society is dynamic, the MCK could not only minimise them but also revitalise its evangelising tools by considering the challenges positively. There is need for the Methodist Church to explore ways of revisiting its life-long traditions and structures and consider alterations that would strengthen its identity and enable the church to achieve the purpose for which it exists.

On the other hand, connexionalism is the most fundamental feature of Methodist identity that particularly contrasts with the Pentecostal organization. I would argue that connexionalism contributes most of the difference in understanding of church that featured in my interviews. It is under this system that a local church is connected to the top governing body of MCK, the Conference, and adheres to the

set regulations and systems that are clearly enshrined in its Standing Orders, while in Pentecostalism a local congregation mostly could stand alone and independent of any other. In MCK, as it is in most other Methodist churches globally, constitutive features of a connexional church are not simple, as Beck (2018) notes. The most visible feature on the ground is the circuit, where you find ministers serving several congregations within the circuit supported by circuit local preachers, use of preaching plan, use of terminologies like ‘assessment’ and superintendent minister. Stationing of ministers is done by the Conference, which is the central authority (MCK, 2015; Beck, 2018), and the church has a series of meetings from the circuit to synod level and finally the annual conference meeting where key decisions affecting the whole church are made and proposals from synods are approved. Most youths find this bureaucratic system difficult and even think it is an unnecessary hindrance to spiritual development. Thus, they opt for the Pentecostal churches where there are no such processes. A discussion of MCK organizational structures in relation to Pentecostal system would shed more light into this identity discussion and to that I now turn.

5.2.5. Structure and Organization

Church governance refers to the organisation and management of the church and the structures that are put in place for easy management. This study seeks to find out how this either facilitates or discourages church movements. The flexibility or the rigidity of the system, as the interviews revealed, determines the reaction by congregants, especially the young ones. Structures and traditions that form a major governing tool of most mainline churches are perceived by some as hindering positive changes to accommodate new realities, and this corporate style of management is pitched against the individual management practised in the Pentecostal churches. It was found that perceived bureaucratic procedures in the Methodist Church act as a hindrance. For example, young people come from Christian groups in secondary schools and colleges and they would like to run their churches the way they do in school. They consequently find the normal operation of Methodist churches as frustrating and ultimately unacceptable: ‘they go to learning institutions they find new things which the church is not ready to absolve.

So they end up going to another church whereby those things they see in their schools are found'. (IP06, 2019, P.2). Others want to preach before following the MCK procedure of becoming preachers and so they are not allowed and finally they may feel like the Church is hindering their spiritual progress and move to where such simplicity is accommodated. The Pentecostal churches offer a ready alternative and give them the space they desire. However, the question here is whether the Pentecostal churches into which these youths move use any procedures, and how easy it is for the Pentecostal churches to alter their procedures compared to MCK's rigid application. Literature on characteristics of Pentecostal churches (chapter two) revealed that most of them are founded by individuals and managed by the founders. Thus, the founders, who could be the pastors, also formulate the procedures and create traditions that they can alter for their own convenience, unlike MCK, which has a historic and institutionalised system.

In my interviews, several instances of collision between the young people and church leaders in the MCK featured prominently. It was discussed in chapter two that traditional churches seek to uphold their traditions, and you can commonly hear statements like 'we do not do that' or 'that is not our tradition' when resisting anything new (Gifford, 2008). In MCK, leaders simply say 'it is not in our Standing Orders'. I see a tension between those who are keen to protect the church's identity and young people who are not interested in traditions. Liturgically-led services seem to be contentious and they play a key role in determining affiliations in Nyambene Synod. It could be argued that such services are so relentlessly pursued that they allow no space to seek or offer consumers' priorities. Therefore, they could be serving only the older generation, as IP01 attests '...they are not given an opportunity to lead in the church...the way of worship is also inclined towards the old people...they feel now the church is for the old people (2019, p.1).

Membership in the Methodist Church is normally through the sacrament of baptism and a service of reception after proper preparation. I offer this as an example to demonstrate the reality some Methodist youths who constitute majority of new members go through. This process of preparation into membership, as stipulated in the MCK Standing Orders, could be long and tedious. One has to be approved by

his/her leaders who proposes the candidate to the minister. Then the candidate is to undergo preparation as a catechumen for about 100 hours under the minister or a trained layperson, after which they undergo an interview by the minister to establish the faith of the candidate. If the leaders and the minister are satisfied with the progress of the candidate, the minister organises for a sacrament course and arranges for a service of baptism and public reception into full membership. The new member is now allowed to receive Holy Communion and assume the duties and privileges of a full member of the church (MCK, 2015). Comparing this process with that of the British Methodist Church, it is evident that the Methodist Church in Kenya remains faithful to what it inherited from the mother church. However, these procedures were put in place for new converts who had never been to a church and applying the same to a young person who has grown in church, who through education has studied and gained more biblical knowledge, is often felt to be a waste of time and effort. Preserving MCK procedures, traditions and heritage is fundamental to its identity, but this creates tension with the explorative spirit of the contemporary youthful Christians (Lenna, 2011). In addition, becoming a member of a mission church often means subscribing to views that denounce many traditional cultural practices, such as polygamy, divination, traditional circumcision for both boys and girls and other traditional practices (Nthamburi, 2000). It is appropriate to point out that while the Methodist Church strictly observes the above regulations, the Pentecostal churches chose not to address such issues. Perhaps they understand the continued tension that results from such stipulations in the mainline churches (Lindhardt, 2015). Instead, they offer ways of using the Holy Spirit to mitigate those traditional beliefs and practices that threaten their worshippers.

The effectiveness of the church to advance the mission of Jesus Christ rests in the people of all ages and races who really form the church and who are agents of the change that the church is expected to bring to the world. Therefore, as Colberg argues, ‘when a church focuses on itself and its structures, it ceases to be the church’ (2018, p.1) as it may not be effective in witnessing for Christ in its generation. It is however important to note that structures are avenues through which the church is able to carry its mission as long as they do not take precedence over the gospel. The

Methodist Church in Kenya for example, still makes use of the order for Sunday morning worship that was introduced by the missionaries in 1916 in Meru (Nthamburi, 1982). The same order featured in the interviews as a cause of friction between the youth and leaders of certain Methodist churches in Nyambene Synod, as IP06 expresses, ‘There is that program that we follow every Sunday; we have like a dictated maybe verses that would be preached in a particular day’ (2019, P.1). This excerpt from a young person who has grown in MCK reveals that he does not even understand the said program, (preaching plan) and yet it is one of the organizational tools that define his church. It raises a question as to how much the young MCK members know about their church and whether the identity foundation upon which the church stands is weak and vulnerable.

The Pentecostal churches by contrast, do not emphasise ecclesiastical structure and traditions so much. Instead, their focus is on a sense of experience of God (Albrecht and Howard, 2014, p.235). Pentecostal churches, in most cases, are founded by individuals who may be the owner and pastor, and this, as Miller and Yamamori (2007) note, explains their lack of structure. Although Pentecostals may differ with the MCK in practice, they remain different expressions of the same faith. Their simplicity in who becomes a pastor, how decisions are made, how the day’s programme looks like, what issues are addressed in their preaching and many other organizational matters make it attractive to the youth. Miller and Yamamori confirm this view and claim that Pentecostal pastors ‘package the religion in a way that makes sense to culturally attuned teens and young adults, as well as upwardly mobile people who did not grow up in the Pentecostal tradition (2007, p.27). The structural organization of the Methodist Church presents a challenge in that it does not allow such flexibility. All the same, as noted in 5.2.1, structures are not to be understood as barriers but as facilitators of ecclesial effectiveness. They need not be taken as permanent when they are supposed to be relevant guiding principles to every generation, but they need constant review.

Although connexionalism stresses interrelatedness, it could also mean connection in fellowship (Beck 2018), inequality is experienced where local churches do not have equal economic power and this affects the services of a minister since one

minister could be serving many congregations. This is because the number of ministers in a circuit is determined by the circuit's ability to pay their assessment¹⁶ so that they can meet their minister's remunerations as opposed to the amount of work really required. Insufficient services lead to Methodist members feeling underfed and desiring to seek fulfilment elsewhere, as noted by Droz and Gez (2017) in their research in Kenya. Respondents also identified this as a weakness that is brought about by connexionalism. IP06 admits that he has to seek what he calls 'spiritual backup' where he keeps seeking and attending spiritual conferences and fellowships from the Pentecostal churches '...personally I feel I need some backup. Spiritual backup from somewhere else' (2019, p.2). In effect, therefore, the structural arrangement of the Methodist Church affects its ability to live up to its calling of mission. On the other hand, Pentecostal churches seem to utilize their advantage to evangelise and at times lure dissatisfied Methodist members since most of their pastors serve one congregation.

The monopoly that prevailed from the inception of the Methodist Church in Kenya in 1862 to around 1970s in the Meru area gave the church confidence that it was fine and therefore its leaders were not able to realize their vulnerability to modern trends and social change. The idea of a religious marketplace is relatively new. MCK leaders did not realize they were in competition and therefore never foresaw a time when any other church would challenge their dominance. Participants describe the MCK as focused on preserving their history rather than being future-sensitive. Its leaders almost dictated to the youth the regulations they expected them to observe without fail, thus denying them freedom of expression and decision-making. Methodist structures of decision-making clearly set out in connexionalism have the goal of allowing all Christians express their views concerning church issues through the relevant decision-making bodies (BMC, 1999, 4.6.7). Despite

¹⁶ Assessment is a Methodist Church term applied to a certain amount of money assigned a congregation by the circuit or a circuit by the Synod or a Synod by the conference to pay in support of the assigning office to run the administrative and pastoral work of that office. Pentecostals preach against this and encourage their members to pay tithe instead a teaching that is supported by the young Christians from both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches as biblical. Assessment has received criticism as the reason for poor giving in the Methodist Church and a concept that is not supportable biblically.

the intended inclusivity of this, it seems from the participants that these decision-making bodies at the local church level are not effective. They are either not democratic or not in use; young people claim they feel left out in key decisions, even when they concern them. ‘And also sometimes they feel that they are not given an opportunity to lead in the church. They feel now the church is for the old people’ (IP01, 2019, P.1). It could also be an indicator of the tension between different understanding of church traditions and the value attached to them by different individuals or groups. Pentecostalism for example does not observe any traditions and may even disregard them. Such practices, like the process Methodist ministers and preachers follow to be ordained or accredited, are challenging as compared to the Pentecostal way of achieving the same. One respondent said he categorically refused to be a preacher in the Methodist Church until he left and started his own church where he is now a pastor. ‘...I was a preacher in the Methodist Church but not in the plan¹⁷. People would really wonder what kind of a preacher and I don’t want to enter in the plan’ (IP04, 2019, P.4). Methodist leaders are perceived as conservative and insist on maintaining the Methodist traditions, while the Pentecostal leaders are seen as flexible and friendly. Unlike the Pentecostal leaders who may not have traditions because of the fluidity of their churches, it is fundamental for MCK to keep its defining characteristics and pass them on to future generations without losing their identity.

5.2.6. Shared Identity

Looking back at the origins of the Wesleyan holiness movement, which later transformed into the Methodist Church, it is evident that it was founded on similar tenets to those of Pentecostalism: that is personal holiness and discipline, scriptural holiness, fellowship and social holiness, and practical salvation evidenced by spiritual activities and experience. Similarly, Pentecostalism emphasises the belief, experience and working of the Holy Spirit that is manifested in the expression of the spiritual gifts. Some scholars of Pentecostalism trace its immediate background

¹⁷ The term plan is a Methodist Church booklet that gives a quarterly program of the events that would take place in churches and circuit (a number of congregations operating as a unit under a pastoral and administrative oversight of a minister referred to as a superintendent). It also gives Sunday services for the quarter, Bible readings and preachers for every church each Sunday.

from the Moravian Brethren and John Wesley revival movement of eighteenth century (Cartledge, 2012, Anderson 2004). Others, including Miller and Yamamori (2007), relate Pentecostalism to its best-known source, the Bethel Bible school, under tutelage of Charles Parham, who was a Methodist, and later his student William Seymour, under whose leadership a second Holy Spirit experience took place in 1906 in Azusa Street, Los Angeles. Many other pockets of Pentecostal outbursts were experienced around the globe at almost the same time but the Azusa street revival spread widely with strong impact in the world (Anderson, 2004, Lamport, Mark A, 2018, Cartledge 2012). These movements were born out of an experience of the Holy Spirit and because the Methodist holiness revival was another similar experience, this indicates its strong foundational relationship with current Pentecostalism. The holiness movement that matured into Pentecostalism ‘was a reaction to liberalism and formalism in established protestant churches. Holiness stood for biblical literalism, the need for a personal and individual experience of conversion and the moral perfection of the Christian individual’ (Anderson, 2004, p.27). These initial characteristics of Methodism are the same values pursued by Pentecostalism and since most Methodist Churches display less of these characteristics while others have abandoned them completely, the MCK is perceived as a different church and Pentecostalism tends to be considered a better option. Unlike the Methodist Church, Pentecostal structures are fluid and flexible since it has no historical continuity because it claims a spiritual direct vocation from God to renew scriptural holiness. They are less interested in form and put more emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit (*glossolalia*) embracing and internalizing the fluidity of contemporary lifestyle. While the two differ in fundamental ecclesial emphases, they both trace their existence from divine experience.

Therefore, it seems that the Methodist Church may have relaxed in its faithfulness to its foundational truths, creating loopholes that have been exploited by Pentecostal churches and movements. The Pentecostal churches’ understanding of their church and its purpose may not be as clearly stated as that of the Methodist Church, but, being twentieth century expressions of Christianity, they came to the scene in postmodern times mostly as reactions to the older forms of Christianity. We could

thus argue that Pentecostalism serves to renew the Wesleyan holiness tradition rather than presenting a new form of spirituality as it is popularly perceived (Abraham, 2019). In fact, taking participants' description of the two, we could argue that the original Methodist emphasis on fellowship and shared spiritual discipline has been lost from the contemporary MCK, but has been recovered by Pentecostalism. One of the experiences that people seek in moving to Pentecostal churches is the very experience of transformation that was originally present in Methodism.

5.2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I note that the tensions witnessed between Methodism and Pentecostalism are essentially due to different understandings of what each denomination emphasises. Pentecostalism lacks a direct connection with history and other Christians worldwide but they claim a direct apostolic mandate from God through the Holy Spirit. Thus, they see themselves as continuing the work of Jesus Christ in the world as they emphasise salvation and baptism by the Holy Spirit, resulting in a life of holiness that is manifested in experiencing the working of the Holy Spirit. The Methodist Church believes in an apostolicity that denotes a continuity with the apostolic mission and living the apostolic faith and that Christian ministry depends upon the call of God (MCK, 2015, p.3), not as an uninterrupted succession. While those called into the ordained ministry in MCK are ordained by imposition of hands after scrutiny and training, the Pentecostals just need one who is eloquent and courageous to start and pastor a church, as respondent IP05 contends. Respondents see the Methodist Church as a formal rigid institution that lacks fervour and is unable to touch the hearts of its members with the gospel while the Pentecost Church is seen as a different and better option for experiencing the power of God. Pentecostal churches provide emotional satisfaction and connection with the supernatural.

The MCK lacks significant literature about ecclesiology: little has been written about its origin and nature, particularly not in the Kenyan context. Globally, while the Methodist Church has acquired many of the elements associated with a church,

it lacks strong ecclesial foundation because its origin was as a holiness movement not an institutionalised church (Chapman, 2018). Therefore, it sometimes assumes and reflects the characteristics of a movement and may face similar challenges to a movement, including having a shaky foundation and a strong inclination to accommodate change. This creates a tension with the desire to maintain status quo to protect its identity as the institutionalised church that it has become.

Despite the conviction that the Methodist Church in Kenya should be structured for mission and be able to respond pragmatically when new needs and opportunities arise (MCK, 2015, p.4), this may not be easily achieved. While identity is important, the Methodist Church is revealed by this study as putting more emphasis on its elements of identity such as structures, traditions and connexionalism, at the expense of its direct divine vocation. It is felt by some that MCK is lacking the Spirit of God that enables an in-depth religious experience desired by a majority of the contemporary churchgoers. While eighteenth century Wesleyan Methodism was a powerful agent of revival, MCK presents a superficial religion that is devoid of the power of the Holy Spirit that keeps a church alive. Young Christians particularly choose to identify with an institution that portrays direct connection with the divine rather than one occupied with the maintenance of historical continuity and structures. It is suggested that the original intent of Wesley is not fully observed because, according to Abraham, 'his mission was to restore inward religion, represented by the life of God planted within the depths of the human heart' (2019, p.30). This would make sense accompanied by the outward form, which would be the expression of the inner faith. There is a need for the Methodist Church to rediscover its heritage and reinvent itself in a way that its foundational characteristics can be useful in enabling the MCK to achieve its missional purpose. Without compromising the key features of its identity, seeking to live its heritage would make MCK vibrant and effective because, as Abraham (2019) argues, Methodism was always a Holy Spirit movement. In addition to different perceptions of what a church is, this research revealed also that the relevance of the church played a fundamental role in determining the choices and movements of Christians

in Nyambene synod. I now discuss church relevance within the Kenyan context next.

5.3.0. Contextual Relevance

Having analysed the conflict between the contemporary pressure on the church and its identity, I now move to the next issue considered important in answering the research question and of significance to the research participants. This empirical research sought to understand the factors contributing to the changing religious affiliation in Nyambene Synod and exponential growth of Pentecostalism. The relevance of the church in the current and fast-changing society is a challenge that the mission churches have to contend with. The issue of the church being relevant in Africa may not be avoided and for it to make sense to the receivers of this faith, it must speak to their ‘existential issues including creation of ritual contexts for dealing with evil and offer of the hope of prosperity as an existential reality’ (Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, 2017, p.324). I should mention here that these existential issues have to do partly with culture, both traditional and contemporary. Although I do not intend to pursue deeply the traditional cultural aspect in this study, because some of the traditional cultural beliefs and practices are no longer useful in the contemporary society and the changing nature of culture, a brief background would help in understanding the interplay between culture, context and Christianity. The fusion between Christianity and African religion and culture produced a form of Christianity different from the one brought by the missionaries. This is because Christianity came into Africa from a Western background and culture, into an African culture, which is different from that of its origin. For it to be acceptable, therefore, it must convincingly make sense and address the issues people are living with in order for them to abandon their older faith (African Traditional Religion ATR) and join the new one. Africans generally have struggled to understand and adapt to Christian faith and this resulted in the formation of churches such as African Initiated/Instituted/Indigenous Churches (AICs) as I discussed in chapter two. These attempted to create a Christianity that blends with the African culture to produce a religion that is at home with the Kenyans (Getui, 2017, p.333). According to Getui, AICs first reacted to the Western-oriented

Christianity and embraced the use of traditional singing and dancing styles, rhythms and instruments. Missionaries did not use these in the mission churches and even after they left, the traditional churches continued to adhere to the mission way of worship and condemned some of the African cultural practices. In addition, these AICs laboured hard to understand the Bible within the African context, leading to their acceptance of polygamy, healing rituals and use of governance structures such as council of elders, which was understandable to them and compatible with Christianity in their understanding (Getui, 2017). AICs also emphasised the spiritual worldview that Africans believed in and maintained the importance of the experience of the Holy Spirit before the coming of the Pentecostal churches. According to Ogunewu and Ayegboyin, as the precursors of Pentecostalism, AICs had already ‘charismaticised Christianity in Africa’ (2017, p.316). As this was a reaction against the mission churches, AICs were attempting to restore what was lost and provide a Christianity relevant to the local people something which mission churches did not. It is upon the foundation built by the AICs that the Pentecostal spirituality thrives, as demonstrated by literature on Pentecostalism (in chapter two). Omenyo, claims that ‘the AICs blazed a path that others have followed even in contemporary times’ and describes the AIC prophets as the precursors of African Pentecostalism (2014, pp.134-136). AICs emphasised the pneumatic and used rituals such as healing and exorcism, deliverance, African form of worship. They also used the ‘holy water’ where contemporary Pentecostals use anointing oil (Omenyo, 2014. P.138).

Therefore, when twentieth century Pentecostalism came, it built on what AICs had started but related it more closely with the Bible, avoiding those aspects of AICs that could be contentious like direct use of witchdoctors and female circumcision. According to Ogunewu, and Ayegboyin, the Pentecostal churches’ ability to ‘work within the African worldview of mystical causality and provide spiritual interventions, account in part for their popularity...’ (2017, p.326). This enables them to perform better than the mission churches that still use the Western church model of not relating the gospel to the socio-economic, political and spiritual situations affecting their adherents. As this study has shown, the Methodist Church

is losing its relevance in the presence of those Pentecostal churches and movements that are perceived to understand the people's needs and speak directly to them. This should not be understood to mean doing the work of social workers but rather promoting a spirituality that is all-encompassing, including the influence of faith on daily lives. The Methodist Church seems to be so emphasising its identity and safeguarding its structures that it loses focus on its spiritual and social responsibility.

Identity and relevance go together in that the twenty-first century church is faced with a dilemma regarding maintaining its identity – that which in essence it is – and pursuing the relevance in the fast-moving world. Moltmann (1974) discussed this double crisis that has already affected the church in the Western world and now seems to be entering the Kenyan Church. The more the church tries to assert its identity by conserving valued traditions and claiming its place in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, the more it faces the potential danger of drifting into irrelevance in a post-modern society that is inclined to focus more on present existential issues and care less about traditions of the past. On the other hand, the church faces the challenge of losing or diluting its own identity in an attempt to keep pace with the changing social life and adapting constantly to what Moltmann calls the 'spirit of the time' (1974, p.14). It is, however, imperative for the church to remain relevant if it is to survive and serve its purpose in the contemporary society. This therefore calls for the church to adjust to the new social demands of the society to which its members belong (Mugambi, 1995, p.17). This can be better understood from Mugambi's definition of theology as 'a systematic articulation of human response to revelation within a particular situation and context' (1995, p.19). This means religion has to address not only spiritual issues but also socio-economic and political issues of its members such that they can hear and experience God in their daily life encounters. It would be detrimental for a church to seem blind to the circumstances surrounding or under which its members live and the challenges they could be facing. Even though Moltmann, a German Liberation theologian was addressing a Western scenario, his concept would serve to articulate the likely situation of the Kenyan mainline church position:

A church which cannot change in order to exist for the humanity of man in changed circumstances becomes ossified and dies. It becomes an insignificant sect on the margin of a society undergoing rapid social change. People ask themselves what difference it makes to belong to this church or not (1974, p.15).

Although Moltmann's description may seem farfetched, in relation to the subsequent literature on the decline of the church in the West it was prophetic. Similarly, in her article on *The Future of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Oduyoye warns that in today's African Christianity, 'a church that does not exhibit 'the gifts of the Spirit especially in the form of glossolalia and other forms of enthusiastic exhibition of ones possession of the Holy Spirit is considered a failed church' (2017, p.471). This is cautionary to the mainline church in its attempt to uphold its identity and relevance.

Most respondents cited what seemed to be a lack of connection with reality of the Methodist Church and a tendency to uphold their age-long traditions that are perceived as 'old school' by the contemporary generation. Other practices that contribute to the church being irrelevant include, the MCK inability to relate faith with real daily life of worshippers, and insisting on rigid structures and systems. The MCK is also seen as unable to move with the times and be innovative to be able to reach the young generation, failing to focus on the worshippers' needs as leaders strive to maintain traditions and systems. On the contrary, they perceived the Pentecostal churches to be more in touch with the contemporary society's needs while the Methodist Church seem to be living in the past.

5.3.1. Integration of Faith and Daily life

The Methodist Church was accused of preaching sermons that do not touch on the challenges their congregants are experiencing. This prompted people to attend a Methodist Church service and later go to a Pentecostal church to experience a more integrated spiritual encounter that they missed in the MCK (Gez and Droz, 2017). I need to point out that Kenyans are generally very religious and there is nothing in their lives that does not have a religious interpretation. Whether they are Christians or otherwise, they have a strong concept of a supernatural power that is beyond

human manipulation and this power is believed to penetrate and influence every sphere of life in the physical world (Mbiti, 1969; Nthamburi, 2000).

Being contextually-relevant does not mean maintaining the older cultural traditions but rather addressing the modern cultural demands that differ from those experienced earlier. According to Nthamburi (2000), the Methodist Church, founded during colonialism, aimed at converting people not only from sin but also from their cultural practices into the so-called Christian culture. By contrast, the Pentecostal churches do not condemn modern culture but invite adjustments within it. Considering the era in which they started and the young age of their members, I can argue that the Neo-Pentecostal churches are post-modern while the Methodist Church is modern and so the Pentecostals are comfortable and fit well with trends of contemporary believers. My respondents appear to unfavourably evaluate the performance of the Methodist Church in this regard, indicating that they think it is unable to engage with the current needs of its members, while the Pentecostal churches find it easier to achieve this.

This indictment of the Methodist Church failing to be relevant or to appeal to the contemporary society can be seen as a matter of the church having lost its founding emphasis, which actually happened before it was exported to Africa from Britain. As discussed earlier, Methodism was a revival movement that arose out of a desire to recapture the relevance and spiritual fervour of the Anglican Church, which John Wesley perceived as becoming ineffective in its time. Similarly, the Pentecostal and charismatic movements that stress baptism of the Holy Spirit, experience and manifestation of spiritual gifts can be taken as an attempt to recover what Methodism once was in its origins: a movement with a later embodiment as a church (Abraham, 2018, p.40). Pentecostalism, with roots in the Wesleyan holiness movement, can be seen as an attempt to rediscover the original enthusiasm of the early Methodists.

Another key characteristic of early Methodism was its emphasis on social holiness, which is popularly understood as the social fellowship of small groups in which Christian faith becomes embodied in shared practice. Life in the Spirit was to be

lived everywhere without separating spiritual and social life (MCB, 1999) a practice that is found in the Pentecostal churches today. Pentecostal Spirituality is ‘the integration of beliefs and practices in the affections which are themselves evoked and expressed by those beliefs and practices’ (Land, Steven J. 1993). Oduyoye expresses this view that spirituality is found

‘in people’s will to enhance the quality of life of others as for themselves...where people are engaged in stamping out evil, in righting wrongs, in seeking justice and doing what is just, and where they sustain and empower those who are engaged in contending with hostile environments both physical and psychological’ (2017, p.471).

Integration of faith and daily life brings the purpose of a church near to the worshipper such that they are able to live their faith as it permeates every sector of their life. Unfortunately, the Methodist Church, though believing and preaching about the Holy Spirit, and having a legacy of social holiness, does not often emphasise the connectivity between the Holy Spirit and people’s real lived experiences. The presence of God in people’s lives feels quite remote in mainline churches, leaving their daily needs unattended. The power of the Holy Spirit is not only able to deliver one from sin but also from other evils that threaten life, including sickness. While the Methodist Church pastors may appear nervous and keep silent on this holistic deliverance, the Pentecostal churches are swift in imploring this power to prevail upon its followers.

Pentecostal churches of course vary in practice, but most of them focus on spiritual and physical needs, making religious experience fulfilling as the pastors relate the power of the Holy Spirit to real life needs. Their prayers and prophecies, as Martin (2002) argues, are ‘mundane’ and they usually target areas such as health, safety, wealth, victory over life’s oppressive situations and other human threats and desires. This is a religion that is not abstract since it relates with adherents at their level and situation – there is no boundary between sacred and profane. In other words, there is no separation of the religious sphere from other spheres of life, a practice often associated with the Methodist Church. IP03 expresses how a Pentecostal church he joined took care of his family including paying rent for them, while the Methodist Church did not support him during and after his marriage.

...here in Pentecost they are feeding us. The pastor is coming to my house to pray with me. The pastor wants to know if we have food for the rest of the month. The deacons of the church want to know whether my wife or whether our systems maybe how we are faring on well, how is our spiritual life, you know encouraging us, pastor is promising to take me to the school of theology, he wants me to know the word. (2019, p.4).

In addition, the expression of spiritual gifts and personal prayer that allows people to communicate to God from their hearts in their own language/words and their own way and posture is key and admired by many who are outside Pentecostal churches. It makes one feel closer to God and develops a personal relationship with God. Thus, what IP04 calls free worship is preferred to the mainline church style of worship that is restricted to a program that allows little 'personal time with God'. The spiritual worldview cannot just be dismissed, because African Christians still believe that it exists and influences the physical (Nthamburi 2000, Sobania 2003). Analysing Pentecostalism in Ghana, Martin, in *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, says that Pentecostals were able to integrate the African spiritual worldview with the exorcism and healing practices of Christianity without a noticeable break or condemnation. 'Whereas mission church leaders envisaged a once-for-all transition from heathendom to Christianity, Pentecostals maintained a continuous fight along the border between the new power of the spirit and the genuine powers of the old satanic order' (2002, p.142). Thus, as Martin argues, a frank acknowledgement of the old and dealing with it in a 'Christian' way, helped the Pentecostals to incorporate other African practices, including dancing with gestures and clapping, which were condemned by mission churches. While it is claimed that Pentecostalism condemns African traditional beliefs and practices (Lindhardt, 2015), in reality they do not deny the existence of the African spiritual world and therefore in their worship and prayers they address such powers and assure their believers protection and victory over them by the power of the blood of Jesus. Exorcism is actually based on acknowledgement of such demonic powers including witchcraft and curses (Meyer, 2004; Cox, 1996; Gitau, 2017).

The Methodist Church's approach to worship has been described as boring and irrelevant and not appealing to contemporary Christians, particularly the youth. This is perhaps the most frequently identified reason for dissatisfaction and

although worship is a wide area, my perception is that in my research, respondents used it to refer to the Sunday service components. These include prayers, singing, preaching/teaching of the word of God coupled with giving and other smaller practices involved. While Pentecostal hallmarks include dramatic salvation and baptism of the Holy Spirit and manifesting spiritual gifts such as tongues, healing exorcism, exorbitant outbursts, one of ‘the great strength of Pentecostal impulse is its power to combine its aptitude for adopting the language, the music, the cultural artifacts, the religious tropes...of the setting in which it lives’ (Cox, 1996, p.259). This makes it possible to reach the young generation of worshippers by speaking their language and using their kind of music. Their creativity, spontaneity and indigenous character become irresistible for the youth, who generally love variety, innovation and new experiences. Indigenization endears the church to the indigenous people, particularly when they can speak, pray and sing in a language they know and like, and this makes the traditional Methodist hymns seem boring to the youths because they would like to sing their contemporary music. There is great influence from the emerging contemporary music industry that is accessible to the youth through media, creating a desire to practice what they see and hear and, of course, these are contemporary lyrics and dancing styles. Although western music has also influenced the youth, the locally produced blend of music sung in a mixture of languages and styles is popular and the youth enjoy being creative in mixing the languages (Parsitau and Mwaura, 2010). Pentecostal churches appear to attach a great deal of importance to personal worship, which therefore opens up space for their worshippers to speak to God in whichever form and language they feel comfortable. These kinds of prayers could be loud or silent, and they are often backed with soft background music that creates a conducive atmosphere for spiritual experience. The desired experience is accelerated by music that brings about emotional excitement and pleasure. The power of music attracts both church and non-church people who generally derive joy from it, especially when the tunes are familiar and local.

5.3.2. Inclusivity

In contemporary society, it is becoming increasingly evident that inclusivity is a necessary tool for successful management. It is equally so in churches, as Gez (2018) discovered in his recent research among Pentecostal churches in Nairobi, Kenya. My research also revealed that the youth rejected decisions that were made without involving them. Lack of a flexible system in the mission churches and in particular the Methodist Church, make it difficult to include new trends, causing the youth to feel dissatisfaction and excluded by their church (Counted, 2012). On the contrary, most of the Pentecostal pastors are young and charismatic and regardless of their education, they are able to connect well with the youth (Miller and Yamamori, 2007) by being creative, enthusiastic, flexible and initiating youth projects where the youth are involved. Unlike the mainline churches, where most organization and planning for any projects is done by leaders of the church and with a very obligatory character, the Pentecostals are more collaborative, giving the youth opportunity to plan for projects that do not necessarily have a strict, binding or traditional appearance (Counted, 2012). In such an environment, those involved build confidence in addition to exploring their gifts and talents. This is a valued leadership characteristic through which, as Ngaruiya discovered in his research, leaders empower the youth by mentoring them as well as promoting their education. Such mentoring by church leaders is also effective in business entrepreneurship and leadership development (2017, p.39). This again critiques the Methodist Church's structures that often exclude the church by limiting their engagement to the youth fellowship.

5.3.3. Systems and Structures

One of the issues commonly noted is that mission churches have leaders who follow the church regulations to the letter and at times act as though they are there to guard the church procedures irrespective of the members' needs. Leaders appear to be disconnected from the reality of congregants' lives, tending to uphold the tradition while others, especially the youth, have moved on. This has actually denied mainline Christians freedom of expression in worship and, for example, they have been made to believe that dancing is sinful, which is the way missionaries perceived it (Nthamburi, 2000). Despite its autonomy, the Methodist Church in Kenya has

maintained governance structures and policies that are derived from the Methodist Church in Britain, rather than exploring suitable ways of making the church more Kenyan. It appears this has been an area of concern and even disagreement between the youth and leaders and indeed, it could be responsible for Methodist Christians seeking services in Pentecostal churches in the afternoon after attending the MCK in the morning (Gez and Droz, 2017).

Unlike the Methodist Church services that follow a pre-arranged order, including topics for preaching, the Pentecostal church pastors are usually alert and ready to address a situation as it arises in the community where their members live. Thus, they usually have topical sermons and teachings intended to grow the believer in a certain pragmatic faith direction. IP04 attests this, emphasising that their sermons and teachings are need-based, where a pastor recognises the needs of his/her congregation and plans teachings targeting those areas he deems important for the growth of the believer into what he envisions:

For example if you want people to be more in prayer life, you would concentrate on teaching about prayer, you can even get preachers from other churches, who maybe are able to teach these things among the people that you see the change that you desire (2019, p.2).

Their concern is actually the believer and therefore their programs are people-centred rather than institution-centred (Mugambi, 1995).

5.3.4. People-centred

Many scholars have described Pentecostalism as particularly concerned for poor people or the lowly of the society (Anderson 2004, 2019; Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; Parsitau 2014) However, another contemporary feature of Pentecostalism is a growing concern with the middle class and the progressive young and middle-aged who are attracted mainly by its progressive outlook and connection with socio-economic advancement (Martin, 2002). Pentecostals are quite concerned with the economic welfare of their members and positive about capitalism. They invest in training that boosts the class of their members and improves their living standards, including counselling on financial and marital matters, youth seminars and trainings, couples' conferences and teachings that touch on a holistic view of life,

not just spirituality. This aspect featured in the interviews from both Methodist and Pentecostal respondents. IP01, who is a Methodist young leader, said there is a gap in the Methodist Church that is not covered while in Pentecostal churches it is taken care of: ‘they are also given an opportunity to have retreats and seminars. For example, young couples seminars... in the Methodist Church, there is that gap is being experienced’ (2019, P.2). A Pentecostal pastor emphasised the importance of what he called ‘spiritual fatherhood’ of the pastor in the church where he takes care of members holistically: ‘a person comes and sits under a pastor, he doesn’t know how to pray, the pastor teaches he knows how to pray, he doesn’t know how to do business he is taught he starts prospering’ (IP04, 2019, P.3).

While I acknowledge the inclination of Pentecostalism towards prosperity gospel, I would argue that the emphasis on Christian discipline by Pentecostals (similar to that in the Methodist Church) has promoted an upward movement of its adherents since they spend wisely, invest, save and avoid reckless lifestyles that would encourage overspending. Thus, Martin argues ‘salvation is understood as a source of social betterment so that socially, believers go up a class while Christian discipline boosted the integrity and economy of the family’ (2002, p. 144). Similarly, John Wesley addressed economic issues in his sermons and advised Methodists to earn all they could, save all they could and give all they could, and this led to Methodist members advancing in social-economic, status as expressed by IP06. ‘...you hear people saying... that Methodist is for the rich people’ (2019, p.8). However, the Methodist Church members who are well off belong to an upper social class that makes the less endowed members of the society feel intimidated and unable to relate with them. In Pentecostal churches, such people feel at home. The composition of Pentecostal churches looks like ‘a gathering of likeminded people that share a common affinity for one another’ and who are likely to have influence on their peers (Counted 2012). In addition, the spiritual aspect of the Methodist Church was overlooked as ‘mainline churches lost interest in conversion understood as personal transformation’ (Martin, 2002, P. 136).

5.3.5. Creativity

It seems therefore the earlier commitment of the Methodist Church to strengthening and maintaining faith and social fellowship has cooled down and been replaced by familiarity, which is one of the causes of boredom cited by respondents. While its organization is commendable, the Methodist Church's use of liturgy with hymns, written prayers, psalms and predetermined readings tends to breed familiarity and predictability that with time becomes boring to the youth and others who like adventure and new exciting experiences. This is noted also by the Methodist Church in Britain who recognize that the 'past can trap a church in denominationalism and make it a prisoner of its own identity' (BCM, 1999, 137). Familiarity with terminologies, hymns and repeated forms of worship as practised in the Methodist Church could trigger a search for a new experience. Innovation is important to the contemporary generation, as noted by Counted (2012) in his research in Nigeria and reflected in his article on *Youth in Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches and Factors Accounting for their Attraction to Pentecostals*. Tradition sometimes can produce stagnating effects, and a church can appear to lag behind especially now that post-modern influence is affecting every sphere of life. For example, the lectionary readings that the Methodist Church ministers and preachers follow through the Christian calendar year sometimes fails to make sense pertaining to the prevailing circumstances. Young Christians feel uncomfortable and disconnected from the rest of the church when it becomes routine and get convinced that such services belong to the old members of the congregation. Thus, they feel as if their needs are not even understood.

In his research in Nigeria, Victor Counted found out that the leading factor that caused youths to move from mission churches to Pentecostal churches was peer influence, which has little to do with any unmet identified needs. However, peer influence is also influenced by a certain attraction that the group has identified somewhere and they keep on inviting others to come and experience. This means they find attractions in the Pentecostal churches and invite their peers to where the attraction is. While the youth keep on moving, the flow of the old members of the congregation is quite negligible, indicating that there is a difference in priority between the old and the young in terms of what they are seeking. The young are

also more prone to change and eager to explore and O'Donovan notes that 'youth look for new ideas, they can easily be influenced to change' (2000, p.207).

It is increasingly evident that change is taking place in the world, and for the church not to be left behind, change within the church is imperative. Faithfully following old traditions and rules is likely to make the MCK a backward-looking church rather than a modern and forward-looking church that is able to speak to contemporary society. A relevant church has to speak to the current generation and respond to the demands brought about by social change rather than concentrating all its attention on historical traditions and procedures that do not fit well with the African social setting. Pentecostal churches organise themselves in a way that many congregants are involved, even though they have seemingly minor responsibilities such as ushers, prayer warriors or intercessors, hospitality stewards, and others. Oduyoye claims, however, that they use the African way of organising society so that no one feels isolated and this provides structures that counter the anonymity of mission congregations (2017, p.462).

As the church struggles to remain relevant by embracing appropriate structural adjustments, involvement and inclusivity, caution need to be exercised so that vital theological emphasis are not lost in the process. The traditions of the Methodist Church, while to some extent a problem for contemporary Kenyan Methodists, can also provide some much-needed stability and doctrinal grounding. A cautious balance between conservatism and flexibility would provide a middle and safe space for the church to continue pursuing its purpose without diluting its core identity. To echo the words of IP06, a young respondent,

Methodist church has more ability than the Pentecostal church to meet the spiritual needs of the young people. Because they have the management, they have learned people, people with information, people who are exposed, yea they are at a better position to provide that. The only thing is that they want to retain what was there, they are not ready for change (2019, p.6).

The youth still have faith that the Methodist Church is in a good position to offer useful services, but only if it embraces change and stops retaining systems that were meant for the past and created in a different context and a western setting. What

was right and relevant in the 60s, for example, does not easily translate to the needs of society today.

5.4. Conclusion

From the discussion above, it has been shown that Christians move from one denomination to another, and in this case from the Methodist Church to the Pentecostal churches and movements. A small number move back while still others continue moving from church to church doing what has been called ‘church shopping’ (Oduyoye, 2017). Some may settle once they get a church they feel comfortable in while others may keep ‘shopping’ for a long time. In seeking to interpret my respondents’ experiences, this research has identified three main factors that trigger these movements and thus contribute to the changes in religious affiliations taking place in Nyambene Synod: personal needs, ecclesial identity and contextual relevance.

It is clear that respondents in my research have a mental picture of the kind of church they would like to belong to, and they feel it is appropriate to keep looking for this due to the contemporary culture of freedom of choice and authority that keeps Christians or would-be Christians constantly searching. It is also noted that the social change that is affecting the entire world has also impacted perspectives held within the church. The findings of this study show an inclination among younger people towards a dynamic church that is flexible, accommodative and adaptive, innovative, responding to the realities of lived experience and speaking to the people in their contemporary setting. This is a church that not only preaches salvation from sin and damnation, but also preaches a gospel that transforms and uplifts people’s lives, giving them a strong faith foundation and responding to their needs in their context.

My research therefore raises the important theological question of what it means to be church in the twenty-first century and, more specifically, what it means to be the Methodist Church in Kenya in the twenty-first century. How does the Methodist Church in Kenya compare with the Pentecostal churches in being a church faithful to its inheritance and yet still satisfying the religious and social-economic needs of

the contemporary worshiper? My interpretation of movements in church affiliation challenges the MCK to think of ways in which we may reconceive what it is to be church and how to carry out the mission of God in the contemporary generation. This study has pointed to key areas that I have broadly categorised and discussed as personal needs, ecclesial identity and relevance to the context.

Importantly, the determining factor for affiliating with any church seems to be based on the individual desires and specifications of each believer, so that personal needs are instrumental in the kind of church a person chooses to belong to. A person has his/her priorities that in most cases are focused on individual preference and wellbeing, rather than strict interpretation of the word of God, or appreciation for theological characteristics of a church. Churches themselves are faced with a choice: maintaining theological and historical integrity on one hand, or satisfying the demands of individuals on the other. This brings into sharp focus the culture of religious consumerism, with its notion of the religious marketplace. Churches and denominations are forced to promote their best characteristics, the best physical appearance of both their buildings and pastors, use the best communication and technological tactics and employ the best personnel in an attempt to satisfy the 'customer'. This can be likened to how businesses use the best salesmen/women to make sure their product sells faster and in large quantities. The focus thus becomes the consumer, and the gospel has to be packaged in a way that suits the taste of the consumers/'buyers'. This consumer Christianity consciously or unconsciously endeavours to change the gospel and the church rather than the gospel transforming the believer. An interview done by Gez in Kenya reveals that the mainline churches are experiencing changes that are caused by the need to respond to the growing fascination of young Christians by Pentecostal practices (2018, p.8). This is an attempt by the mainline church to retain young people in their churches and curb the trend of them moving to the Pentecostal churches. Additionally, the consumerist spirit threatens the unity that is one of the core hallmarks of the church, promoting competition amongst churches and believers as they engage in different measures to outdo their perceived 'opponents' in order to attract and keep more believers to their fold.

Secondly, Christians, particularly the youth, have become increasingly mobile in search of a church of their taste. My findings indicate that one of the reasons for this is that their perception of church and what they are seeking differs from the Methodist Church's perception of its own being and purpose. While ecclesial identity is critical for a church to engage in any meaningful proclamation of the gospel to its people, the ecclesiology of the Methodist Church in Kenya is not fully developed or understood by people on the ground. The Methodist Church has continued to hold onto missionary structures and concepts even though these are not effective in its context. The church universally shares and continues the work of its Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Colberg, 2018) and therefore it needs to develop structures and systems that are useful in enabling it to achieve this purpose.

The third issue that is instrumental to changing affiliations is the perception that a church is expected to attend to the public and social issues that face the particular community where it is based, in addition to preaching the gospel of love and salvation. Thus, the relevance of the Methodist Church in Kenya is increasingly challenged since the western missionary concepts and practices generally fail to respond to the contextual and existential issues facing its congregants. There is a strong desire for a church made in Kenya for Kenyans. By this, I mean a church that interacts and understands the Kenyan socio-economic, religious and political setting, the Kenyan (African) worldview, values and practices that are integral to all people including Christians, and which speaks the Kenyan language. The Methodist Church, I note from my research, has not integrated itself fully with its community to be able to walk the journey of life with its congregants. It is perceived to remain aloof to the plight of the community and so it faces the danger of being seen as foreign and abstract many decades after being introduced in the country.

The church in Africa lives among people who are faced with myriads of challenges, some life-threatening including diseases, poverty, insecurity, illiteracy, joblessness, violence, drug abuse, high child mortality, ethnic and political wars and many others. However, the gospel is not restricted by time, space or personality. It speaks to all generations at all times and places and an African Christian desires to hear the

gospel addressing their situation. While I am cautious to claim that Pentecostal churches provide solutions to these challenges, my research shows that people feel that they are aware of the issues, preach hope to their congregants, and promise them a God who gives them victory. They have effectively preached an omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God, whom every believer needs to put their hope in, especially when life challenges are overwhelming. Some respondents feel that the Pentecostal churches and movements satisfy their perception and need of a church better than MCK. While others still hold on the belief that the Methodist Church is better placed to be an ecclesial presence in Kenya longer term, they also agree that the current performance of Methodism is not satisfactory. One important question for the Pentecostal church is whether it will change substantially as the demographic of its membership changes, following the same trajectory of improved economic status that impacted the Methodist Church many years ago.

One reason for my research is the need for the Methodist Church in Kenya to look back, re-evaluate its performance in the last one hundred and fifty-eight (158) years of existence in Kenya and take deliberate action to address the contemporary phenomenon of youth migrating away from the church. The inability of the church to sustain its youths only serves to deny it not only the expected growth and progress but also the fulfilment of its mission. The absence of young people in a church or the continuous outflow as is now evident may promise a dim future for the church. Having listened to my respondents, my research has identified three interpretations of their experience which will need to be addressed in the final pages of this thesis if the Methodist Church is to learn from the experience of church movement in the Nyambene Synod. The next chapter will therefore identify two issues arising from my research that I suggest the Methodist Church in Kenya will need to grapple with if it is to remain relevant and yet fulfil the purpose for which it is called. I now endeavour to discuss the impact this complex phenomenon has on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod as it interacts with Pentecostalism.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPACT OF CHANGING RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ON THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA

6.0. Introduction

Through this research, interesting insights have emerged as to why young people are moving away from the MCK to the Pentecostal churches, which has contributed to the exponential growth of Pentecostalism in Nyambene Synod. The movement of the youth has had an impact on most traditional mission churches in the region but for the purpose of this research, I have explored the effect it has on the Methodist Church in Kenya. In this chapter, I explore two conceptual findings that arise from my literature review, empirical research and interpretative analysis. These provide an answer to my third research question, and constitute my contribution to knowledge: first, the pressure for the Methodist church to acknowledge and respond to the contemporary inclination towards an ecclesiology of spiritual marketplace; and second, the clamour for an indigenized Christian faith. My research has shown that today's religious environment reflects an understanding of spiritual consumerism as an acceptable norm. It also demonstrates a desire for indigenization of Christianity where the church is expected to integrate fully in a community, responding to the issues currently affecting its congregants and the society where it lives.

Unlike the Pentecostal churches and movements that are perceived to be good options in the religious marketplace, in touch with the people on the ground, the Methodist Church is increasingly being seen as one that has not fully grasped these matters and is therefore failing to maintain its attraction in the current generation. It is viewed as still holding onto western ideologies, approaches and structures that make it unable to integrate faith and life in Kenyan communities. This does not mean that the Methodist Church started by missionaries in Kenya exists in the same form it started; rather, it has been slow and reluctant to upgrade its systems in line with the prevailing social changes that affect its members. I now discuss the two

concepts of marketplace and indigenization as developed through my research; it is my contention that the Methodist Church needs to pay attention to both of these to address the issue of changing ecclesial affiliation satisfactorily. Doing so is a more nuanced response than simply adopting and imitating the practices of the Pentecostal churches. These two concepts – engagement of the church with the contemporary context and religious consumerism – provide a challenge for a paradigm shift in the MCK towards shaping a church by Kenyans for Kenyans. This, as John Gatu, a Presbyterian Church of East Africa cleric argues, calls for a Christianity that takes into consideration those tenets of African life that may have been disregarded and uses them to build strong pillars for a Christian way of life for believers in their setting (2006, p. 14). Such values include, for example, the African leadership system that organised society such that everyone felt included.

In exploring these conceptual developments, this chapter challenges the MCK to find different ways of responding to the changing socio-religious landscape, even as the Pentecostal churches seem to be ahead in being part of the change. This challenge is made more acute by my research, which reveals that people feel the Methodist Church has not responded well to necessary change in the past. This failure could be either a conscious or unconscious decision not to take any action, or, on the other hand, an attempt to simply copy the approach the Pentecostal churches have taken. The Methodist Church needs to recognise that it now exists in a changed environment and that the Pentecostal influence may not subside but may continue to grow. Therefore, it would be appropriate for the Methodist Church to seek a renewed understanding of its self-identity and mission for the future. Crucially, here, this does not mean that the Methodist Church simply needs to become more ‘Pentecostal’, but rather gives it an opportunity to respond differently to the desire of a Kenyan-made church that can engage with a religiously consumerist culture.

6.1. A Desire for an indigenized Church

Several African theologians have discussed the concept of indigenization. Kenyan scholars such as Mugambi and Nthamburi have contributed to this discussion, and

recommended it as a way of making Christianity at home in Africa. This research has found that empirical experience points towards the same need, indicating that the African church has yet to free itself from Western shackles and find a new expression of Christianity that is integrated fully in its local setting. It is interesting to note that, while indigenization was often discussed in reference to the missionaries' approach, today the same theme comes up in reference to the local mission churches that were left behind by the missionaries. Traditional church leadership has not recognized the need to make the churches any more African than it was when it started, despite continuous pressure by dissatisfied members over the years. Indigenization here is used to mean a situation where believers are able to integrate their Christian faith fully with the socio-economic and political environment in which they live and to make decisions within that context based on guidance by the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Indigenization is thus not the same as the 'independence' from Western culture and dominance, although that remains a continued desire for the African church expressed in the 'three self' principles of the All Africa Council of Churches: self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating (Gatu, 2006). Indigenization is rather an inclination towards responding to challenging issues such as poverty, political, domestic and gender violence, illiteracy, initiation rites, family life, joblessness, health issues, communal life and governance and African religious beliefs among others in a localized Kenyan Christian way. In addition to these challenges, African Christians also seek a religious voice in issues such as celebrating the blessing of a new-born baby, blessing a business, praying for marriage partners, breaking of barrenness, rain and many other life situations. These desires for indigenized faith rise against a backdrop of mission Christianity that created discontinuity with indigenous religious culture and practices, in favour of western religious practices embedded in so-called civilized culture (Oduyoye, 2017; Bowen, 2007; Getui, 2017). The indigenization desired here, therefore, is a rediscovery of lost African values that the contemporary generation seem to acknowledge may satisfy those patterns of human life and transcendence that Western religion, culture and technology is unable to satisfy (Bowen, 2007, p.157). This part of the chapter discusses the call for a localized church (indigenized church) under three key areas that have been

emphasised by my respondents, whose implications the Methodist Church might need to consider: first, building a strong Christian fellowship that gives a strong foundation to face life in a Christian way; secondly, the importance of engaging with social issues affecting church members, such that it does not appear that the Methodist Church is interested only in preaching the gospel out of context; and thirdly, addressing the structure and systems of the MCK, which are perceived as rigid and a hindrance to the church's purpose, in addition to failing to provide cohesive governance and order in the community.

6.1.1. Christian Fellowship

First, the Methodist Church is experiencing pressure to acknowledge the importance of communal life and faith as opposed to an almost privatised religion that is practised exclusive of the believers' daily social life and experience. If the church is to be effective in its mission, there is a need to recognize the growing desire for a fellowship that not only explores the word of God but also provides a forum to nurture effective Christian living and relationships. Church members must be seen as both Christians and members of the society where they have grown up, and the church needs to provide an environment where social and spiritual values can shape their shared Christian life. Arguing for a South African Methodist interpretation of Christian perfection as African Christian Humanism, Forster's argument usefully captures this viewpoint.

...across the world, but particularly in Africa, there is a resurgence of interest in humanism in general and Christian humanism in particular, because of the observed need for transcendent meaning and the recapturing of shared moral values that express human solidarity for the common good (Forster, 2018, p.15).

Forster argues that social location and social identity have shaped and reinterpreted Wesley's teaching on Christian perfection from an African perspective, so that South African Methodists can now understand and identify with it. A church that would purpose to carry its mission successfully must not lose sight of the location and identity of the people among whom it intends to thrive. The Methodist Church in Kenya, according to research participants, could be seen as ignorant of the social identity and location of its members because it carries on with the western oriented

approaches and methods used by the Western missionaries. While they continued to propagate the Western models and ideologies, the Pentecostal churches acknowledged and adapted themselves to suit the time and context of their worshippers. In particular, Pentecostals seem to have recognized that indigenous religious beliefs and practises are closely interwoven into culture and often seep into Christianity despite the earlier efforts made by the missionaries to eradicate them. Oduyoye attests to this and attributes the booming deliverance ministries, exuberant dancing, and spirit possession in Pentecostal-style Christianity as all related to African traditional religion where they were practiced before coming of Christianity (2017, p.332). Whether young or old, African Christians would like to worship and relate to God in their social setting and connect with God both as individuals and as a community of believers sharing their griefs and their joys. In Africa, and particularly in Kenya, individualism or privatization of religious beliefs and practice is a foreign concept. Even though individual Christians can pray privately, as Jesus recommended in Mathew 6:6 to counter the Pharisees public show of piety, communal prayer and worship is highly valued.

Rediscovering communalism in Christianity is crucial because ‘there is a loss of confidence in Western individualism and the emptiness of the commodification of persons and creation’ (Forster, 2018, p.15; Bowen, 2007). There is a need to understand and respond to the effects of social change brought about by modernism, education, urbanization, and technology that affected social networks and cohesion, family units and social justice systems. In an attempt to reconnect or retrieve their humanness, many people, as Bowen notes, ‘accept messages that affect their emotions and links them in close fellowship with other people rather than a gospel presented in form of truth to be understood’ sometimes intellectually (2007, p. 157). The church in effect plays the role of a social support system for its members, a concept that takes us back to consider the social holiness that Wesley emphasised for early Methodists. The concept of social holiness advocated that Christians come together in fellowship, where they manifest holiness in their shared Christian love as a people of God as opposed to a solitary Christian life. Walton described social holiness as referring to ‘environment or activities that are conducive to growth in

holiness because they bring together those seeking holiness into a place of grace' (2019, p.27). He differentiated social holiness from social justice and noted that many Methodists have used the two interchangeably even though they do not mean the same. According to Walton, 'social holiness refers to corporate contexts in which Christians find the means of grace, while social justice refers to a social and economic philosophy for a more just society' (2019, p.29). This social aspect of Christianity is what early Methodism emphasised and practiced but it seems it is not the same faith that missionaries introduced in the Kenyan Methodist Church. With time, the MCK became notably weak in providing a conducive environment for its members to find and share in the means of grace. One can argue therefore that social relationships and the communal human life of Kenyans is not fully reflected in the church as the church increasingly drifts towards the Western individualistic lifestyle. Elaborating what Pentecostal churches do from a Pentecostal pastor's point of view, IP04 stressed the importance of a fellowship that has unity of purpose to worship together and share life together.

So a Godly fellowship is where people will come they will get right spiritual nourishment, they get trained, they get a home where they can now fellowship, they start living with one another, serving God together, attending to individual people's needs, raising and propagating the commission in truth. So finding time for one another, and more essentially just doing church together, let me call it doing church together (2019, P.7).

This warmth and togetherness is missing in the Methodist Church now, though it was one of the key pillars upon which early Methodism stood

6.1.2. Sensitivity to contemporary Issues

The second aspect of indigenization touches on the need for the Methodist Church to be in touch with issues on the ground so that it can offer spiritual guidance, relief and hope to its congregants when they are facing challenging situations. In Africa and particularly in Kenya most people have a high consciousness of religion and indeed most attend church and desire to have their life issues whether positive or negative addressed in church. This view is demonstrated by Orobator, who says that as Christianity in Africa continues to grow, those who embrace the faith 'come with their joys, sorrows, their hopes and despair seeking to make sense of them in the

light of faith' (2010, p.6). A member comes to church not only to hear the gospel of how God loves him/her and forgives their sins, but also to hear how this God manifests his love to the worshipper and what God has to say about their life outside the church. The worldview of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, resonates well with the traditional understanding of causality and how to deal with evil, particularly using the resource of the Holy Spirit, as Getui contends (2017, p.337). Although western-oriented mission churches would not acknowledge it and the Pentecostals name it differently, the African perception of the supernatural world and its influence in the present life is common in every generation, whether they are in the village or in urban areas. Thus, as Ngaruiya notes, 'the church plays a central role in addressing societal problems in distinctively Christian ways' (2017. P.33), because in most cases the church in Africa is the first place people look upon in times of difficulties. It could therefore be argued that the church may not abdicate this role and still claim to be serving its members effectively. The church also remains a place most Christians may choose to celebrate their achievements and blessings and calls for the church to be vigilant to its members' needs. The following excerpt from the research interviews clearly shows the scope of responsibilities placed upon a pastor and these expectations are highly likely to be paramount for sustenance of worshippers in the contemporary Kenyan setting:

...it is because you go there for spiritual needs. When you go to that church, you meet a spiritual authority who will walk with you the journey of your faith. He will meet your spiritual needs, he will attend to your social needs, he will attend to your kind of development needs, attend to your family, attend to the needs that are actually even outside the spiritual needs. He will walk with me even when there are other social needs that I have' (IP04, 2019, P.6).

This is an indication that a Kenyan worshipper does not perceive life as consisting of sacred and secular components. Religion, to Kenyans, goes far beyond church attendance into their social lives, a characteristic from African religion and culture that interweaves both in one entity (Oduyoye, 2017). The Methodist Church fails to demonstrate its awareness of the current issues its members are going through since it does nothing about them while the Pentecostal churches take time and effort to respond to them as respondents attest: 'in the Methodist setup it will not allow the people to be attended on the issue that they have at hand...' (IP01, 2019, P.2). Issues

that members ‘have at hand’, as IP01 says, could be many and while some could be similar in nature to those of another church or society at that particular time such as an outbreak of a disease or famine, there are others that are unique to the congregation in question and its surrounding and individual Christians. Such issues require a localized response; systems that were set hundreds of years ago may not be sensitive to them and thus there is a call for the church to continuously review its contextual attention to its members. Continuous adjustments are required as long as the church remains focused on its purpose as attested by IP04: ‘as long as there are changes which are moving with the modern trends and they may not be necessarily be in contravention with the scripture, or the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, it is necessary to accommodate them’ (2019, p.10). Chipenda argue that ‘a successful church programme ought to meet the physical, moral and spiritual needs of all groups’ and added that a church without an ‘attractive programme for the children and youth is doomed to failure (1997, p.5). This takes us to the third aspect of mission churches that the Methodist Church need to consider for indigenization.

6.1.3. Church Governance

Church structures and systems are key tools of governance that give harmony and order to institutions and make management effective. However, their effectiveness could be hampered if they remain rigid irrespective of the times and contemporary needs of people being served by such structures, especially when they affect the progress of the institution they are supposed to promote. This study therefore is not proposing their abolition but a deliberate review to accommodate and address issues that arise in different settings and different ages which require contextualised attention. African church leaders and theologians who met in Kenya in 1991 in All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) symposium (Mugambi, 1997) envisioned this. Mugambi states clearly that ‘the church in Africa will need to re-orient itself and re-order its structures in order to become an effective instrument to serve the people of Africa in the twenty first century’ (1997, p.1). The church, like any other social institution, is and ought to be dynamic since current changes in Kenya and other parts of the world also affect those who attend church services. These changes actually challenge the church to reflect those changes in the songs sung and sermons

preached (Chipenda, 1997). One can see what these leaders envisaged already happening through Pentecostal churches through their extremely flexible structures, which makes adaptation more easily achievable than in the mainline churches. Thus, respondents view Pentecostals as responding to issues as they arise while the Methodist Church maintains its tradition, ignoring the current situations their members are facing: ‘the Pentecostal setup, when an issue arises, it can be addressed through the preaching’ (IP0, 2019, p.3). Since there is no set programme with a clear lectionary selected for that day, pastors choose a text that would be relevant to the prevailing circumstances

The way of doing church within the Methodist Church in Kenya entails adherence to the established governance systems that members and leaders are encouraged to follow. This research prompts a critical question about how these structures have helped the church to advance its central aim of continuing Jesus’ mission and how they have failed to do so in the Kenyan context and so need to be critically assessed. The Methodist Church in Kenya is under pressure to listen to its congregants, including those who are leaving, and ask hard questions rather than ignoring them, assuming that it is the leavers who have a problem, rather than the church they are leaving. Traditions are not only being questioned but are criticised and resisted, especially by the younger generation and this challenges the church to rethink the viability of its structures, as Nthamburi (2000) proposed twenty years ago. It is time MCK leaders critically ask, for example, about the effectiveness of the organization of the men’s fellowship, women’s fellowship, and youth fellowship. Is the way they are organised serving the needs of the church in the contemporary society, or do we need to introduce other levels or do away with some of them to make the system more effective? This will therefore form one of the recommendations discussed in the concluding chapter. Colberg puts it thus:

In order to respond to the reality of a rapidly changing, thoroughly globalized and highly technological world, the Christian community must consider what structures might be most responsive to the need of today while being consistent with its theological commitments and witness of tradition’ (2018, p.29).

It is interesting to note that this is also understood by the British Methodist Church, which has recommended that revision of church traditions is necessary to remain

only with that which is useful in the current generation. As noted above, familiarity in structures and systems can lead to boredom, and while conservatism may be useful for passing on Christian values and traditions that are fundamental to the faith and identity of the church, it can become a hindrance when it fails to recognize new ways of practicing Christian life. For this reason,

discernment is needed to distinguish between the Methodist features of history and tradition that need to be cherished and handed on to the wider church and those which need to be abandoned or adapted because they no longer contribute creatively to contemporary Christian life (BMC, 1999, p.37).

This study observes that there is little dissatisfaction about doctrine, and it is rather the mode of delivery and how it connects with the worshippers' situation, that is of greatest concern to believers in Nyambene Synod.

The Methodism principle of connexionalism has a duality in its interpretation that I suggest has not been fully grasped by the MCK leadership, both lay and clergy. The British Methodist Church's statement on the nature of the church, *Called to Love and Praise*, which can be claimed to provide a theological basis for the nature and practice of the MCK, which is lacking in the MCK itself, Methodism's connexional structure is described as an intertwinement of autonomy and interdependence:

...at all levels of the church, the structures of fellowship, consultation, government and oversight express the interdependence of all churches, and help to point up at all levels, necessary proprieties in mission and service. ...alongside this, as the natural corollary of connexionalism, local churches, circuits and districts exercise the greatest possible degree of autonomy. This is necessary if they are to express their own cultural identity and to respond to local calls of mission and service in an appropriate way, (BMC, 1999, P.51).

Although not explicitly stated, I interpret this duality as an opportunity left to the leaders to determine how far to carry each of them as long as they respect the key connexional elements. This would mean that a degree of flexibility is possible, depending on the locality of the congregation. For example, where local churches engage in mission and plant churches that have new members who have not yet been baptised and received into full membership of the MCK. Such churches need leadership to organise them as they grow to maturity in faith. This is a local not a

connexional matter and therefore its solution belongs with the locals and not the conference, the top MCK governing body. However, my interviews revealed that the perception (and most likely the practice on the ground) is that MCK has no autonomy to run local churches with any level of independence. Some leaders do not recognise the freedom they have to be different or to do things differently, if the congregational needs require it. Such a misunderstanding impacts behaviour and attracts the generalized criticism that the MCK system is rigid. As we now see, this perception is both true and untrue depending on the ability of the leaders and ministers concerned. It is also observed that the Methodist Church has not liberated itself from the colonial mind-set that simply adopted the statutes of the missionaries, but there is need for such liberation, to take whatever missionaries left behind as mere guidelines that need to be improved upon or discarded if they do not fit the local socio-religious environment.

One unhelpful practice that has continued from the missionaries is the labelling of church groups as men's, women's, youth or junior (children). The MCK has struggled with these categories since for example this system does not take into consideration the ages of these groupings, so some ages always feel out of place particularly where the age gaps are wide (IP01, 2019). While other groups continue to live within these difficulties, the youth have reacted in several ways including changing churches, being passive and sometimes stopping attending any church at all. Such reaction calls for the Methodist Church leaders to be innovative and seek to provide spiritual services to meet the demands on the ground rather than sustaining structures that are not useful to the mission of the church. Pentecostal churches have taken advantage of this missing dimension (Counted 2012) and introduced smaller groupings within the bigger group so as to be effective in reaching out to every age group:

...to have retreats and seminars. For example, young couples seminars, because the transition between the youths that have not been married and those who are married, in the Methodist church, there is that gap is being experienced. Somebody feels that he/she doesn't belong to the youth, and he/she cannot fit in the bracket of the old men and women. So in the Pentecostal churches they nature, that gap is not experienced because they are taken care of maybe through seminars, through retreats (IP01, 2019, p.2).

To support such bespoke spiritual provision, governance need to be consultative, not only at the top level but also at the bottom to take into consideration the needs and views of those on the ground. This concept is embedded in the Methodist connexional principle, but one may question whether it has in fact been put into practice, given the tension that has been witnessed between leaders and the youth. Paying more attention to various groupings in the church body would also promote democracy and allow all members to own the church and feel valued. Nash addresses the youth issue using a multifaceted approach and suggests that ‘youth ministry is not a one-dimensional activity; it is about facilitating and empowering young people to have a better, more abundant, rich and satisfying life. This involves being concerned about their whole lives not just the faith bit, wanting to see them fulfil their potential and be all that God created them to be (Nash, 2011).

Indigenization, as we have explored it here, is simply about ensuring that each individual Christian is able to connect their lived experience with their Christian faith. My empirical research has shown that this is a crucial reason that people seek a new religious experience.

6.2. Church as a Religious Marketplace

The religious marketplace is a novel understanding of church that has overtaken Christian churches, and the Methodist Church finds itself facing this challenge especially from its younger generation. It is a concept which is easily recognised and adopted by Pentecostal churches and movements, where the popularity of a church is determined by the quality of its services as seen from the consumers’ eyes perceived and judged by the same consumer/worshipper. Religious consumerism is an aspect of globalization and social change leading to a break with institutionalised churches, autonomy and freedom of choice (Mentatul, 2017). The entry of Pentecostalism to the religious field has particularly promoted this concept. As this research found out, one of the reasons why people move from one church to another is because they are searching for one that will satisfy their quest of a perceived ideal church. IP06 is categorical that they do not move just because there is a Pentecostal church nearby but they move because they find what they are looking for in that

particular church: ‘...you don’t go to any church because it’s a Pentecostal church. Maybe after identifying there is something that you need that is found there’ (2019, p.5). This is an indication of a search for that which would contribute to personal satisfaction. Some of the characteristics they are looking for include recognition, baptism of the Holy Spirit, presence and manifestation of the spiritual gifts, freedom of worship and flexible systems that accommodate new practices. They are also looking for a church that will contribute to their social-economic welfare in addition to spiritual nourishment. This shopping list indicates that individual Christians are seeking a version of church that can meet their desires and bring satisfaction to their lives. Although consumerism might be considered communitarian in the sense that the consumer may need others to express and share gains, it is immensely driven by individual interests as it seeks personal fulfilment (Mentatul, 2017). At the same time, some of the beliefs and practices that benefit from this religious marketplace phenomenon, such as the individual authority exercised in making choices, look quite individualistic. As noted earlier, individual or private religion is not an African concept but a result of a globalization and capitalism that is contrary to the African social/communal life and existence.

The Methodist Church now is beginning to recognize this competitive environment and the challenge posed by the numerous churches that are multiplying so fast with immense influence. Many mainline churches have responded to this threat to their survival by changing their practices in order to remain relevant in the marketplace and keep their ‘market share’, as Parsitau (2014) and Deacon and Lynch (2013) contend. One can notice attempts by some Methodist churches to revitalise service delivery as they get in touch with the reality of their lost monopoly and the existence of an open marketplace (Gez, 2018). A number of mainline churches have purchased musical instruments and revived outdoor preaching (crusades) in an attempt to reactivate evangelism where it had weakened. Research by Gez confirms that the ‘changes are triggered by the need to respond to the younger generation’s fascination with Pentecostal and charismatic churches’ practices’ (2018, p. 8) which most of my respondents identified ‘...perceived, eh, enhanced spirituality, random prophecies, speaking in tongues and services that are just spontaneous’ (IP02, 2019,

p. 4). However, the global wind of change is too fast, the search for meaning and spiritual answers has adapted the rapid speed as Husemann, and Eckhardt (2019) have noted, and the mainline churches find it difficult to keep up with the trend.

Crucially, as a result of theologically reflecting on the spiritual marketplace, the Methodist Church should not simply copy what the Pentecostal churches are doing, but rather explore its own ways of understanding and responding to these demands, considering the theological implications of the proposed changes. This research therefore proposes a different response from the MCK that would involve seeking to rediscover the Wesleyan heritage of social holiness as a way to bring back much of what the contemporary generation is craving. The Methodist Church in South Africa has done this with considerable success, as Forster (2018) has demonstrated.

One respondent who has moved to three denominations in thirty-seven years felt that movements of young people would continue as long as their thirst is not quenched: 'Most of that, age group moves a lot. And they don't just move to one church-many move to many churches, because they have that hunger and desire that, they do not really know how to address' (IP01, 2019, P.7). As is common practice with a free market, many churchgoers with unmet and sometimes unidentified needs flood into new churches that open in their vicinity (Gez and Droz, 2017), but within a few months some move to a different church while others may return to their original church. This is supported further by O'Donovan who argues that the youth who occupy more than sixty percent of the population in Africa, are easily influenced to change because they look for new exciting and popular ideas (2000, p.207). They can therefore be attracted to new and even unusual religious movements including cults for mere curiosity or adventure.

This research challenges the popular belief that the mainline churches have got it all wrong and are to blame for the restlessness witnessed and dissatisfaction in the spiritual field. While this may be partly true, the general development of spiritual consumerism as a wider cultural trend means that ecclesial restlessness is inevitable, regardless. It is also true that Pentecostals are beneficiaries of a postmodern wave, which they are part of and fit in easily, while the Methodist

Church and other traditional churches belong to the era of colonial modernity and need adjustment to fit in today. Therefore, despite the contemporary understanding of spiritual consumerism being the new normative, the Methodist Church needs to intelligently engage with this phenomenon and respond appropriately. While it appears acceptable and popular, especially among the proponents of Pentecostalism, consumerism can be considered alien to the gospel and also to the African culture.

Consumerism could therefore be a fertile ground for psychological manipulation and selfish modification of social norms, as ecclesial proprietors try to keep in pace with the latest fashion and so for them, the income or profit surpasses quality and ethics (Mentatul, 2017). Their followers may also demand quick or instant remedy pushing the pastors to manufacture those ‘miracles’. This could be the possible explanation for the fake miracles attested by IP06, and the many reported cases in the media in Kenya (for example, the Daily Nation, 25 Dec, 2019).

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter has considered the impact of the interpreted experience of religious movement on the Methodist Church in Kenya. It is clear that the Methodist Church in Nyambene, like many other mainline churches, is burdened with critical issues that were never anticipated in the missionary times, and these require new resources if they are to be addressed appropriately. As discussed above some of these critical issues include the approach that the church took to propagate the gospel, which has increasingly become untenable in the contemporary generation. It has been made aware that it needs to connect with people on the ground and respond to their issues in a way that they can identify with. For it to be able to integrate faith and life, this would mean a call to the church to revise the model of church inherited from the missionaries and bring it closer home to speak to the indigenous people of Kenya.

Secondly, this research has made it clear that the MCK no longer enjoys the religious monopoly it had before in Nyambene, and therefore it has to assert itself in a competitive marketplace. People are freer and more autonomous in decision-

making and, coupled with effects of post modernization and the entry of Pentecostalism, the religious landscape has changed along with the way people navigate that landscape. What was popular may not be popular now; this prompts a challenge to reconceive what it means to be a Methodist Church in such circumstances. Opening up the spiritual marketplace has facilitated increased confusion about what the role of the church in society actually is, as is noted by the Anglican Church of Kenya Bondo Diocese Bishop, Professor D. Kodia (Atieno, 2019). Congregants increasingly perceive the church to be there to serve their welfare and to satisfy their demands, rather than to fulfil its key purpose of proclaiming the saving word of God to them. The Methodist Church in Kenya thus may need to consider revisiting early Methodism as an alternate resource for recovering effectiveness today, since Christian fellowship and social life were not separated as it ministered and shared in the early history of Methodist societies and class meetings. This research, therefore, has interestingly concluded that the best response of the Methodist Church to the rising appeal of Pentecostalism is not the adoption of contemporary Pentecostal practices, but rather the recovery of an early heritage than colonial Methodism: the heritage of the Wesleyan spiritual and social revival.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.0. Introduction

This thesis has sought to explore the changes in religious affiliations in the Nyambene Synod and their impact on the Methodist Church. It explored the interaction between Methodism and Pentecostalism in Nyambene, how this has affected religious affiliations and how the Methodist Church has responded. Along the way, I have had opportunity to assess some commonly held assumptions which I had brought to this research, in particular the perception that the Methodist Church lost young people to the Pentecostal churches largely because it did not offer worship that displayed an experience of the Holy Spirit and its manifestations. Another assumption often made was that people moved to the Pentecostal churches because of the popularised benefits of the gospel of prosperity and faith achievements among Pentecostal worshippers. A further assumption was that the Methodist Church was too strict in observing its procedures and systems so that it failed to adjust to contemporary ways of doing church that would keep it relevant to the contemporary generation. This included the assumption that MCK governance structures were losing popularity with the young generation in favour of the more flexible structures of Pentecostalism. To meet the objective of the research and address these assumptions, this research first undertook a literature review to attempt to understand the religious landscape in Kenya, and subsequently conducted an empirical study in order to hear and collect information from worshippers in Nyambene Synod. This chapter gives a summary of the thesis findings, highlighting the key areas addressed in each chapter and finally summarising the contribution this thesis makes to knowledge and practice, as it answers the main research question.

7.1. Thesis Summary

This study focused on the interaction of Methodism and Pentecostalism in Nyambene Synod to discover how they interact with one another in the experience of believers, acknowledging the role played by other agents of change in the

contemporary society. The first chapter provided the introduction and the background of the research in which a brief context of Nyambene Synod was given, including the place of the Methodist Church and the Pentecostal churches in the region. It detailed the motivation of the study and articulated the problem as it was identified by the researcher. The chapter further identified the significance of the study in the scholarly and socio-religious world and its intended contribution to the world of research.

The second chapter consisted of the exploration of literature from other scholars in the field of Pentecostalism, emphasising the Kenyan context, as it laid the foundation for the empirical research and opened up discussion with the wider scholarly world. Pentecostalism and the changing religious landscape in Kenya and in particular Nyambene was discussed, giving the background context for religious experience in the Synod. The pre-Christian Nyambene Synod is of significance to the research, since it was the ground on which Christianity was introduced, and further religious development in the Synod starts from encountering the Africa Traditional Religion and the African socio-religious worldview. The interplay between ATR, Mission Christianity, AICs and later Pentecostal Christianity was highlighted, since this is a feature of Christianity that play a significant role in determining contemporary religious trends in the Synod.

In addition to literature study, this research collected primary data from the ground in Nyambene Synod. Chapter three therefore discussed the methodology that guided the whole process of study. A qualitative method of study was considered appropriate, with an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design. The chapter also limited the study area to the Nyambene Methodist Synod and the sample targeted by the research, are Christians who have an experience of both the Methodist and the Pentecostal Christianity so that the movement between the two denominations is a lived experience for them. Purposive sampling techniques were applied to select participants and the chapter described the interview method used. The chapter finally discussed ethical consideration, and outlined the research process and analysis using IPA.

The fourth chapter presented the first level of analysis of the empirical research findings, in which key themes were identified from the respondents' interviews: worship, structures and governance, teachings/preaching, talents and skills development, pastoral care, friction and misunderstanding, evangelism and publicity. In chapter five, I moved to the second level of analysis crucial to IPA, in which I offered an interpretation of these themes, as I made sense of them: personal choice, ecclesial identity, and contextual relevance. Finally, in chapter six, I explored how the experience of changing church affiliation in the Nyambene Synod impacted the Methodist Church, focusing on the two important issues of the religious marketplace, and the call for indigenization.

7.2. Factors affecting religious affiliations in Nyambene Synod.

The focus of this study was to find out why Nyambene Synod is experiencing changes in church affiliations with many young people leaving the Methodist Church and choosing to affiliate with the Pentecostal churches in the area. A field study was carried out among Christians who have experience of both the Methodist and the Pentecostal churches either by having been members or associating with both denominations closely for not less than four years. I also picked participants for whom these movements are significant. This was done so that I could understand more intimately how such members view, understand and interpret this phenomenon.

This research confirmed that indeed young people are moving from the MCK to the Pentecostal churches in Nyambene Synod. It has also revealed that there are varied reasons that encourage the youth to move. The picture is a little uneven, and some may keep moving from one church to another, although the trend is typically from the mainline churches and in particular in Nyambene the MCK, to the Pentecostal churches. The reasons for this movement include, not exclusively, a desire for a vibrant worship that involves miraculous acts and a search for caring relationships or a loving community where one's spiritual and social needs find attention. Others move for personal reasons that include a dissatisfaction with the way church services are done and personal desires to serve that are not quenched by their current

church, while others still blame the MCK systems and structures for hindering positive changes, and for being backward looking other than upward looking. Some who move, for example, desire to climb the ladder of leadership and ministry of preaching, but they are not willing to follow the procedures laid down in MCK so they leave. Others want to join ordained ministry but are not prepared to pursue it the way MCK has specified.

A literature study on Pentecostalism has demonstrated that there are several reasons why Pentecostal churches attract many young people. Scholars hold the view that faith or prosperity gospel, which promotes the notion of Christians' divine right to receive their desires through faith coupled with acts of faith like giving and commitment to church activities, contributes to Pentecostal popularity. Secondly, the Pentecostal churches tend to emphasise an experience of the Holy Spirit above such aspects as structure and systems that are emphasised in MCK. They strive to be contemporary in addressing the social issues of their followers and remain aware of challenges facing their members, offering remedies by imploring the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

This study revealed contemporary factors that influence church affiliations in Nyambene Synod as identified and expressed by research participants who are experiencing the changes. These factors, as demonstrated in chapter five, tend to be influenced by social change, social location, experience and culture (Bevans, 2002). I would broadly suggest that these factors involve holistic pastoral services that address spiritual, social, political and economic issues facing Christians in their daily lives and not just propagating the gospel of salvation and deliverance from sin. People go to church generally not because they realize they are sinners in need of forgiveness but because they perceive church as a place where they will get both spiritual and social benefits here and now as they prepare for eschatological benefits. This means the church is valued not only for evangelism but also for its service arm that provides spiritual and physical services to those being evangelised and those who are already its members. In Nyambene, as interview participants revealed, people look unto the church to pray for their healing, for financial breakthrough and for general success in life, offering hope in challenging life

situations including relationships and political matters. These factors that affect religious affiliations are discussed in more details below under the following subheadings: consumerism and privatization of Christianity, understanding of Church identity and relevance to host society. They should, however, not be considered separately because they form an interrelated combination that influences change and trigger movements.

7.2.1. Consumerism and Privatization of Christianity

As discussed in the previous chapter, the privatization of religion here describes a situation where increased freedom for individual Christians allows them to chart their own religious boundaries and religious requirements without paying much attention to others. This promotes personal choices in determining the church one would like to affiliate with, consequently promoting a culture of religious consumerism. Religious consumerism is a capitalist concept that allows individual interests to supersede community or group interests and in Christianity, this comes into play when personal preferences guide individuals to make religious choices. Changes that have taken place in the modern world including globalization, education, urbanization and technology, are responsible for the consumer culture that is new especially to the local traditional churches that had until recently, maintained a monopoly in the local setting. Most of my research participants who left the Methodist Church made reference to their own experiences and decisions that resulted from those experiences. Those who missed a chance to preach or did not have patience to follow the laid down procedures, for example, started their own Pentecostal churches and became pastors. Others complained of a lack of freedom and room to experience and express their own spiritual gifts, and they left in search of Pentecostal churches that offered that. It is however noted that due to freedom and personal independence, individual Christians form their own religious perspectives and practices, not based on the normative practices and beliefs of their religious institutions as Gez (2018) contends.

The experiences narrated by my participants suggests that the Pentecostal churches are at home with spiritual consumerism and recognise that they are living in a

culture that demands a religious expression that satisfies the consumers/worshippers' personal requirements. While this may not be theologically sound – since it takes an individual as the central focus rather than God – many Pentecostal pastors put extreme effort to please worshippers and attract as many as possible. This is the reason behind their attraction to pomp and colour in dressing, meticulous decorations of their church buildings, encouraging and motivational sermons and attractive spiritual promises of miracles and blessings. Additionally, these churches offer powerful worship (singing praises and worship songs, spontaneous prayers and occasional tongues), and invest heavily in church musical instruments and skills. This is done to meet the desire for music and dancing that is highly attractive to young and old Kenyans, regardless of their religious affiliation. It would not be surprising to find people attending a church purely for entertainment as suggested by IP03 (2019), whose church attracted some MCK youths because of his high skills in playing music. This package attracts many who are looking for such characteristics in a church. The danger noted here is that this is consumer-centred rather than Christocentric. While it demonstrates the Pentecostal churches' ability to give attention to their members' needs and to provide desired services, it can nevertheless appear unmoored from theological and ecclesial foundations. As mentioned in chapter five, some Christians may feel that they decide the message – the kind of 'gospel' – they want to hear rather than listening for the Gospel of Christ speaking to them in their situations. Pastors pay attention to the demands and therefore it is possible they may compromise faithfulness to gain sustainability of their churches, as is evidenced by some noteworthy public cases.

On the contrary, the Methodist Church is yet to recognise and respond to the religious consumerism culture. It has not yet learned how to be church in a consumer society. The Methodist Church has not satisfactorily met the expectations of her members particularly the youth forcing them to look elsewhere for fulfilment. Participant IP06 confirmed that he needed spiritual backup even after attending a service in the MCK so he kept attending conferences and other spiritual meetings in the Pentecostal churches. The challenge for the Methodist Church is that this

culture results from the changes taking place in the society and therefore it is not a situation that will pass away. The church will need to adjust itself to respond to this demand in a way that it will not compromise the message of the Gospel.

7.2.2. Differing Understandings of what a Church is

Modernization, globalization, and other factors influencing social change in the world are also changing the nature of the church that shares its members with the world. It is particularly important to note from my research that there are changing perceptions about what a church is, when comparing the older mission churches and the recent Pentecostal churches. This research revealed that people hold differing perceptions as to what a church means to them, creating a tension between the institutional centred (MCK) and the social/individual centred (Pentecostal) churches. A church is expected to attend to the public and social issues that face the particular community where it is based, in addition to preaching the gospel of love and salvation. The church brought by missionaries and the church propagated by the Pentecostal proponents are seen as different in Nyambene Synod, standing for different values and beliefs. Respondents see the Methodist Church as a formal rigid institution that lacks the Holy Spirit and is unable to touch the hearts of its members with the gospel, interested in propagating its traditions and ignorant of existential issues facing its followers. On the other hand, the Pentecostal Church is seen as a different and better option where the power of God through the Holy Spirit is experienced in liberating people from social, religious economic and other human needs. These different perceptions result from the way the two denominations present themselves and how they interact with the society.

The Methodist Church, which is a traditional mission church, is organized and strictly orderly in observing its traditions, systems and structures. It worships the way it was taught by the missionaries, using a set liturgy where singing is from hymnbooks and sometimes prayers are read. MCK has been accused of missing the Holy Spirit because it does not worship vigorously and exhibit manifestations of the Holy Spirit, as the Pentecostals understand and practice. Lack of speaking in tongues, exorcisms, spontaneity in prayers and singing, mean that people perceive

MCK as not supporting the works and presence of the Holy Spirit. Early Methodist missionaries created a clear break with existing African traditions and cultural practices, and this attitude has tended to persist, despite resistance early on from African Independent Churches that sought to restore lost cultural customs and practices in a synthesis of Christian and African values. This research has concluded that there is also a discontinuity between the MCK and the original Wesleyan movement of the eighteenth century, which stressed the fellowship of believers as they shared life, beliefs and the love of Christ in what was called social holiness. Methodism was started to preach scriptural holiness, but this is an embodied concept of mission that is often missed in practice in MCK. The communal aspect of the Methodist Church is also under threat from the individualistic and privatised understandings of faith already mentioned.

Pentecostals' understanding of their church and its purpose may not be as clearly stated as that of the Methodist Church, but being late twentieth century expressions of Christianity, they came to the scene in postmodern times mostly as reactions to older forms of Christianity. Contrary to MCK, Pentecostalism presents itself as an alternative to the rigid MCK governance structures, and offers a flexible way of doing church that has attracted many who are uncomfortable with the Methodist Church systems. It is congregational and lays no emphasis on ecclesial structure as opposed to MCK that is not only institutional but also connexional. Pentecostalism emphasises the belief, experience and working of the Holy Spirit that manifests in the expression of the spiritual gifts and promotes social relations in its many people-centred programs. It can package its messages and programs to respond to what people desire while MCK guards its traditions jealously and resists frequent changes. Therefore, Christians understand these two churches to be different and perceive MCK as difficult and living in the (western) past.

However, looking back at the origins of the Wesleyan holiness movement, which later transformed into the Methodist Church, it is evident that it was founded on similar tenets to those of Pentecostalism today: that is, personal/social holiness and discipline, scriptural holiness, fellowship and practical salvation evidenced by spiritual activities and experiences. Therefore, it seems that the Methodist Church

may have relaxed in its faithfulness to its foundational values, creating loopholes that have been exploited by the Pentecostal churches and movements.

Indeed, as we noted, Pentecostalism itself can be claimed to have originated from Methodism. We could thus argue that contemporary Pentecostalism serves to renew Wesleyan social holiness rather than presenting a new form of spirituality, as it is popularly perceived, a view supported by Abraham (2019). In fact, participants' description of their perception of MCK revealed that the original Methodist emphasis on fellowship and shared spiritual discipline is missing, meaning the contemporary MCK appears disconnected from John Wesley's original spirit. One research participant claimed that 'those who get born again and they have an experience of the Pentecostal movement, when it misses in Methodist they decide to move' (IP04, 2019, p. 3). Rigidity by the Methodist Church leaders accelerates this movement of its members into the Pentecostal churches because when the young people desire and demand changes, the leaders remain adamant. This has meant that the MCK has lost its relevance in the community, since it is considered not to be able to speak to them in their current situations.

7.2.3. Relevance to Host Society

The third factor that contributes to the movement of young people from MCK to the Pentecostal churches is that of the relationship between church and society, which affects how relevant a church is to the society it is living in. I have argued that a church can only be relevant to a people if it identifies with them where they are and gets involved in their daily life encounters. It should be able to answer questions asked by the society it is living in and respond to their situation. For a church to be relevant to people in Kenya, and Nyambene in particular, the gospel must speak to the whole person in a way that the believer can fully identify with his/her faith. Christians must live their faith in their difficult and distressing conditions of poverty, disease, tribal conflicts, political upheavals and exploitation, economic depression and many other circumstances that threaten the very core of their existence (Nthamburi, 2000). At the same time, Christians must feel the comfort of their faith as they celebrate blessings and other life achievements in line

with their African worldview – not separating faith and other spheres of life, as pointed out in chapter two and six.

In its pursuit of faithfulness to Christianity as presented by missionaries, the Methodist Church has found itself facing the prospect of irrelevance, because it has not been able to integrate itself with the society whose ethos and practices it condemned at the beginning. African rituals were replaced with Christian rituals that do not perform the same functions as those they replaced. African singing and dancing was replaced by the Western/Christian way of singing while other aspects of their spiritual worldview were condemned as demonic or superstitious. Mission/western-oriented governance structures replaced African traditional ones that were highly respected and effective. While Pentecostal hallmarks include salvation and baptism of the Holy Spirit and manifesting spiritual gifts such as tongues, healing exorcism, exorbitant outbursts, one of the strengths of Pentecostalism is its ability to adopt the language, music, cultural artifacts and other features of the context where it lives. It seems to understand, appreciate and acknowledge the underlying cultural and spiritual aspects that are part of its believers and instead of trying to uproot them, Pentecostal Christianity provides some continuity as well as transformation. It allows Christian faith to integrate with those African deep-seated worldviews, to produce a Kenyan-made Christianity. These factors have contributed to the changes in religious affiliations in Nyambene Synod and consequently the movements triggered by these factors benefit the Pentecostal churches.

7.3.0. Impacts of changing Religious Affiliation on the MCK, Nyambene Synod.

This study had a third objective of uncovering how the movement of young people has impacted the Methodist Church. The MCK has been affected in several ways, according to my research findings. Some of these include loss of the youthful energetic members that could offer financial support to MCK, and who are also the future vision carriers and implementers since they are well endowed with resources. Friction between denominations develops due to accusations and counter-

accusations. This is a threat to the unity of churches and Christians who would tend to support their own churches in any disagreements. Changes in ecclesial affiliations has also caused retarded growth in MCK in terms of spiritual, numerical and infrastructural development. However, two features stood out as effects and lessons for the Methodist Church, and if attended to with priority would respond to the challenges mentioned above. These features are categorised as:

7.3.1. Contextualization of Christianity

Indigenization is used to mean integrating Christian faith fully with the socio-cultural, economic and political environment in which it lives. This would entail that the Christian faith is not perceived as a threat by those receiving it but rather as a friendly agent of change through the Holy Spirit and the word of God, a religion that can interact with the worshippers at their level and context, and understand their world and respond to human issues appropriately. According to experience in the Nyambene Synod, the Methodist Church needs to recognise that despite its faithfulness to mission Christianity, it has neither integrated fully into the Kenyan contemporary culture taking consideration of the context, nor sufficiently communicated a holistic gospel to the local people. Christianity is still understood as foreign to the people such that it is not able to address some contextual issues, meaning worshippers look for interventions elsewhere. MCK is called to recognise the need to integrate faith and life experiences and not to treat them separately, to link Christianity with the indigenous spirituality, which undergirds the way Kenyans appropriate and respond to Christianity. Indigenization and contextualisation affirm that Christianity is not necessarily an agent of discontinuity of all that is local, but rather can connect useful local values and practices with the Christian faith to form a religion that is at home in context. This way the gospel can speak to contemporary environment and respond to social issues from a Christian perspective. Thus, Christianity can reform and refine the contemporary culture rather than seeking to abolish and replace it. Therefore, this research reached a conclusion that the Methodist Church faces pressure to be in touch with reality on the ground and respond appropriately rather than maintaining its own status quo.

7.3.2. MCK in a competitive Religious Marketplace

The second lesson is that the religious landscape has changed and MCK has to adjust and employ skills that can assist the church in remaining a participant in this changed environment. Here, I am not suggesting the MCK should simply adopt more 'Pentecostal' practices, because I recognise that Pentecostal churches may have been overly associated with religious consumerism so that they are unable to offer appropriate critique of some of consumerism's negative elements. Recognising that it exists in such a religious marketplace, the Methodist Church in Kenya might invest its theological and spiritual resources in the recovery of its Wesleyan heritage in order to offer an alternative ecclesial identity to that promoted by Pentecostals. Such an offer would be thoroughly communal, and would challenge the assumption that personal preferences and desires for fulfilment should guide choices about ecclesial association.

This research indicates that the religious marketplace that is favoured and practiced by the Pentecostals promotes a consumer culture that consequently makes the worshipper the centre of focus rather than God. While the Methodist Church is under pressure to respond to this new concept, it is not to compromise its role of propagating the gospel. It can provide a balanced way of attending to the needs and demands of its worshippers without compromising core Christian values. This research therefore challenges the popular assumption that the mainline churches have got it all wrong and are to blame for the restlessness and dissatisfaction witnessed in the religious field today.

By acknowledging this, it is noted that movements between churches will not cease, even if the Methodist Church 'got it right', because the influence of consumerism means that changes are bound to keep happening and so renewed demand and continuous seeking. Instead of then seeking to be in competition with the Pentecostal churches, the Methodist Church ought to revisit its ecclesial paradigm and make principled changes based on a recovery of communal holiness, rather than responding to individual consumerism.

Judging from past trends of religious movements, we can suggest that while Pentecostalism may continue to grow in forms and numbers due to its flexibility and its ability to adapt to new environments, its growth is not necessarily permanent or long lasting. While the growth of Pentecostalism has clearly influenced the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, Pentecostalism itself has also been influenced by the same social trends. It is therefore likely that its interaction with the traditional churches – particularly through the movement of members – could influence it to take a middle ground, as was observed with the AICs and EARM that challenged the mainline churches but later settled into compromising stance. It is a characteristic of revival movements to calm down after some time and adapt some features from the existing churches and movements (Abraham, 2019). Neo-Pentecostal churches face a challenge of sustainability, shaky governance structures and overly authoritative leaders, which cause schisms.

7.4. Recommendations

In order to clarify the contribution to practical theology made by my research, I here make the following recommendations to the MCK:

- i. The MCK revisits its Wesleyan heritage, which is rich with elements currently desired in the Kenyan context. This is necessary because the experiences narrated in this research suggest that MCK either abandoned its heritage or has given minimal attention to the concepts that made the original Wesleyan movement flourish. Pentecostal churches have focused on many of the same Wesleyan theological emphasis and challenged the relevance of MCK using its own resources.
- ii. Christian faith propagated by MCK needs to be allowed to affirm and transform contextual and cultural practices that do not contravene the biblical teachings. Basing its theological reflection on scripture, tradition and experience, the MCK needs to seek to acknowledge the African indigenous spirituality, and produce a synthesis between Christianity and useful African values. This would produce a church that is more at home in the Kenyan context – a church for Kenyans by Kenyans.

iii. The structural organization of MCK needs to be reassessed in order to introduce governance tools that allow development of a truly *Kenyan* Methodist Church. This would seek the recovery of African models of leadership, as Nthamburi (2000) proposed twenty years ago. Addressing this would provide opportunities for younger members to actively contribute to the future of the church, which they currently feel is not possible. In particular, existing organisations within the church – such as men’s and women’s and youth fellowships – may not be as relevant to contemporary Christian life as they once were, as attested by the various other kinds of fellowship groups that flourish in the Pentecostal churches.

iv. The Methodist Church needs to live in the present and hold onto its past in an amicable tension with the contemporary religious marketplace, recognising the competitive nature and commercialisation of the gospel by many players who have come up due to freedom given by the Kenyan constitution concerning founding of new churches and denominations. In this new context, the MCK is challenged to discover and then communicate its understanding of what it means to be part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic body of Christ. This study has shown that people are not leaving MCK for Pentecostal churches because they consider Pentecostal churches to have a *better* ecclesiology, but rather for more personal reasons. The stage is therefore set for a theological recovery, that could restore the MCK with an ecclesial identity.

7.5. Areas for further Research.

This research has identified other areas that were considered to go beyond the scope of this study, but could form the basis for further investigation. For instance, this research could be developed by exploring the trend of religious nomadism where people keep on moving from one church to another and sometimes even going back to the initial church where they started. This practice raises further questions about whether the reason for movement lies in the practice of theology and ecclesiology or in the spirituality of the individuals themselves, and the value they attach to denominationalism.

A second area of study is the Methodist Church's heritage as a springboard for twenty-first century evangelism and discipleship. This is a particular need within the Kenyan context, as despite the place of the MCK in the Kenyan religious landscape, the Methodism which arrived in Kenya had already lost touch with some of its founding impulses in the Wesleyan revival. A sensitive recovery of the Wesleyan tradition for the Kenyan context would be a fruitful area for further research.

Changes in religious affiliation in Nyambene Synod are likely to continue, and it is unlikely the trend from MCK to Pentecostal churches will be stemmed anytime soon. However, this research has arrived at a deeper understanding of the causes of this movement, located within the contemporary character of the religious environment and the self-understanding of the church in society. In bringing these factors to light, this thesis hopes to contribute to the ongoing work of God in Nyambene Synod, as all churches seek to be more faithful to the gospel in context.

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APPENDIX i

Research Project Title:

Changing Religious Affiliations: the impact of Pentecostal Spirituality on Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

Question 1

CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU MOSTLY WANT TO GAIN FROM GOING TO CHURCH?

- How well does the church you attend fulfil your desires or meet your expectations?
- What would you like to see happening or not happening in your church?
- how would you wish to make sure that your desires are met

Question 2

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE MOVING FROM METHODIST TO PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES?

- How can you describe the movement, who moves and what could be the reason for the movement?
- How does this movement affect the churches involved?

Question 3

CAN YOU TELL ME YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE OF GOING TO BOTH CHURCHES?

- How can you describe the experience of attending both churches?
- Do you attend the same church all the time?
- If you do, why
- If you attend another why
- What could make you attend another church other than your own church?
- What would stop you from joining another church (strengths)

Question 4

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO GO TO BOTH METHODIST AND PENTECOST CHURCH?

- How comfortable are you with the practice?
- Would you recommend or discourage this practice
- Would you prefer seeking experience in other churches or would you like them happening in your own church?
- What would you like your church leaders to know about this
- What changes would you like to see in your church?
- Have you ever attended an urban Methodist or Pentecost church?
- Would you like to tell me the experience?

Question 5

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO TELL ME?

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DR. RALPH LEE



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Section A: The Research Project

1. **Title of project:** Changing Religious Affiliations: the impact of Pentecostal spirituality on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod, Kenya
2. **Summary of research.**
The research to which you are being asked to participate, is about the changes in church affiliations triggered by Pentecostal Spirituality and the impact this has on the Methodist Church in Nyambene Synod.
3. **Purpose of the study**
The purpose of the study is purely for the researcher to pursue a PhD degree being studied through the Cambridge Theological Federation and Anglia Ruskin University.
4. **Name of your Supervisor:** The Revd Dr Richard Clutterbuck.
5. **Why have I been asked to participate?**
You are asked to participate in this research because you have experience in the Methodist and Pentecostal Christianity having worshiped or attended both churches in your life as a Christian,
6. **How many people will be asked to participate?**
The research aims to interview a number of Christians who share this experience from both Methodist and Pentecostal Churches. However, you may be the only one from your church because others will come from other churches across the Synod

7. **What are the likely benefits of taking part?**
You need to know that taking part in this study will not attract any direct benefits to you. Nevertheless, the study may yield some useful information for both the mission and Pentecostal churches.
8. **Can I refuse to take part?**
Yes, you can refuse to take part in the study without giving a reason. Under no circumstances should you feel under pressure to take part.
9. **Has the study got ethical approval?**
Yes, the study has ethical approval from an ethics committee at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
10. **Has the organisation where you are carrying out the research given permission?**
The Methodist Church has given me permission and since I request to interview you as an individual leader/member of your church, care will be taken so that rules of your church will not be contravened. However, you have freedom to decide whether you would like to take part in this research or not.
11. **What will happen to the results of the study?**
The main objective of this research is to collect data for the preparation of a PhD thesis. In the process, part of the work may be presented at research conferences.
12. **Contact for further information**
If the need arose to contact me for further information, you can reach me at alice.mwila@pgr.anglia.ac.uk, while alternatively you can either use an Anglia Ruskin University telephone number: +44 (0) 1245 68 4920 or the Cambridge Theological Federation telephone number: +44 (0) 1223 760 085.

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

1. **What will I be asked to do?**
As a participant, you will be requested to give your responses to the questions that I will prepare. Before the interview, you will have access to my proposed questions so that you may make an informed decision on whether you would be comfortable to answer them. I will only need to see you in one session of one hour. To avoid inconveniencing your schedule so much, the interview will take place at a place, and time that you will be comfortable with. After going through the questions, you will be given the Participant's consent form to go through. Once you are satisfied with it, you will be asked to sign it. Once this is done, I would request your permission to have the interview session recorded.

2. **Will my participation in the study be kept confidential?**

As a researcher, it will be my responsibility to ensure that your participation in this study is kept as confidential as possible because the data will only be generated and used for academic purposes. As such, only my supervisor and examiners will have access to your data. I will also try to generate the information, disseminate it, and write up my thesis in an anonymised format. However, I may not be able to guarantee you complete anonymity. If this is not possible, I will take care to obtain your consent to use your data in a way that would identify you as a participant. For example, it is likely that in disseminating the findings, I may quote you to substantiate my arguments.

3. **Use of recording equipment.**

I plan to record our interview session with your permission. The transcript will be safely protected from being accessed by any other person apart from my supervisor and examiners. After analysing the data, the transcript will be kept secure in the custody of my supervisor's office.

4. **Travel expenses**

You do not need to be worried about travel expenses. The interview will take place at your place of choice, meaning that I am the one who will incur the travel expenses to where you are.

5. **Possible disadvantages or risks.**

The study interview will not go more than one hour. As such, your participation in the research is likely to be risk free. I will ensure that the questions are user friendly so that the interview finishes within the agreed upon time. You need to be aware that your agreement to participate in the study does not affect your legal rights. You will be free to ask questions, before, during, and after the interview session.

6. **Withdrawal from the study.**

You can withdraw from the study at any time and without giving me a reason for that. I realise that you may not feel comfortable telling me directly that you would no longer like to take part in my research. In such a case, you may inform me through an email. If you withdraw at a time when I have already collected some data from you, I will seek your permission to continue using the data. If you decide otherwise, your responses will be given back to you. However, the last approximate time it would be possible for you to withdraw your data is before I have written the research up for my degree or published findings. In addition, you are free as a participant to decline to answer any interview question (s) you do not wish to.

7. **Special precautions to take before, during or after taking part in the study.**
The interview is intended to take place at your place as a participant. You and I will ensure that we secure that place of interview by conducting the interview at the time that is convenient to you. During the interview, I will try as much as I can to use the language that will be appropriate to you. After the interview, the data collected will be safely kept by myself to ensure that no one accesses them.

8. **Sensitive information.**
You may want to know that as you give your responses, there may be some sensitive piece of information that you may tell me. This would only be disclosed to my supervisor.

9. **What will happen to any data that are collected from you?**
Be informed that it will be my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that data collected from you is securely held. In the process of my research, it is only my supervisor that will have access to your responses. At the end of the research project, the data will be held for about 5 years in the office of the Wesley House Director of Studies who is my supervisor. After this period, the data will be destroyed. I will also ensure that your consent form is kept separately from the data.

10. **Copy of the transcript.** I am
carrying out qualitative interviews with you as a participant. I will go through a copy of the transcript before the actual interview so that you may know the nature of the questions that we will be looking at in the interview. Be informed that all the responses from you will be kept confidential. No any other person apart from the supervisor will access them.

11. **Summary of research findings.** If you
would like to see the summary of research findings from this research, you can send a request and I will provide it through email.

12. **Contact details for complaints.**
In an event where you feel you have any complaints about the study, you are encouraged to speak to my Supervisor in the first instance. You may also feel free to channel your complaints to the Cambridge Theological Federation office, and the Anglia Ruskin University's complaints procedure. Below are contact details:

Supervisor: Rev. Dr Richard Clutterbuck: Email address: rnc31@cam.ac.uk

Postal address: Wesley House, Jesus Lane, Cambridge, CB5 8BJ, United Kingdom.

Federation office: Email address: general-enquiries@theofed.cam.ac.uk

Postal address: The Bounds, Westminster College, 2 Lady Margaret Road, Cambridge, CB3 0BJ, United Kingdom.

Email address: complaints@anglia.ac.uk

Postal address: Office of the Secretary and Clerk, Anglia Ruskin University, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1SQ.

Version control

Date 10.05.19

V1.0

APPENDIX iii



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of Participant _____

Title of the project: CHANGING RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS: THE IMPACT OF PENTECOSTAL SPIRITUALITY ON METHODIST CHURCH IN NYAMBENE SYNOD, KENYA.

Main investigator and contact details: ALICE MUTHONI MWILA

Postal address: Wesley House, Jesus Lane,
Cambridge CB5, 8BJ, United Kingdom.

Email address: alice.mwila@pgr.anglia.ac.uk

Members of the research team: Rev. Dr Richard Clutterbuck (supervisor).

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet, version number V 1.0 of 10.05.19 for the study. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
3. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

4. I understand what will happen to the data collected from me for the research.
5. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.
6. I understand that quotes from me are likely to be used in the dissemination of the research.
7. I understand that the interview will be recorded.
8. I understand that care will be taken by the researcher on issues of confidentiality and anonymity should any sensitive information be disclosed in the process of an interview.
9. I understand that I have the right to decline to give my response to any question I am not comfortable with.
10. I understand that I have the right to launch any complaint I may have about my participation in this research to the researcher's supervisor, Cambridge Theological Federation, and the Anglia Ruskin University.

Data Protection: I agree to the University¹⁸ processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant (print).....Signed.....Date.....

Name of person

witnessing consent (print).....Signed..... Date.....

PARTICIPANTS MUST BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP
ADD DATE AND VERSION NUMBER OF CONSENT FORM.

¹⁸ "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its Associate Colleges.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY.

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please speak to the researcher or email me at alice.mwila@pgr.anglia.ac.uk stating the title of the research. You do not have to give a reason for why you would like to withdraw. Please let the researcher know whether you are/are not happy for them to use any data from you collected to date in the write up and dissemination of the research.

Date 10th May 2019
V1.0

APPENDIX iv

INTERVIEW WITH IP06 28/8/19

QN. 1 WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL ME WHAT YOU MOSTLY WANT TO GAIN FROM GOING TO CHURCH

L. thank you. Number one, the most important thing, reason for going to church is to **grow spiritually** that's one of the main one, secondly is to **attain the purposes of God in one's life**. I think those are two main ones.

CAN YOU ELABORATE A BIT WHAT YOU MEAN BY ATTAIN THE PURPOSE OF GOD?

L. Okay, I think by going to church according to the knowledge I have so far, there is always the purpose of God for every person that is born and a church being a place **whereby we get saved** and we are **taught spiritual things and things of God**, it is important to also **grow and understand what is your personal purpose**. What was Gods personal purpose for your life and that would bring some fulfilment. If you feel you are in the line with your purpose.

YOU ATTEND A PARTICULAR CHURCH, HOW WELL DOES THIS CHURCH FULFIL YOUR DESIRE OR MEET THAT EXPECTATION.

L. I can say not fully, because, I tend to think my church is somehow, having attended another church and having been taught many other things about the word of God, I feel they are not yet up to that standard of making somebody grow spiritually and also attain that purpose of God. Because you realize **its about the help of the holy spirit**. I tend to think that my church, the church where I fellowship (Methodist) **have less time for that**. It **does not concentrate on that so you do not grow spiritually**.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPENING AND NOT HAPPENING IN YOUR CHURCH

L. now one, apart from, I think I like my church because of the planning, they arrange things, the follow up of eh. **Everything is done so systematically**, and it is a nice way. But at the same time we don't advocate, they are not very flexible. They are **not very flexible in terms of spiritual matters**. Maybe with the social issues, they can handle them very well but spiritually we need to **give more time to the Holy Spirit and advocate change**. Yea, that should be happening, then eeh being flexible, being flexible in terms of programs and systems, planning yea.

NOW WHEN YOU SAY THEY ARE NOT FLEXIBLE WITH SPIRITUAL MATTERS, WOULD YOU LIKE TO IDENTIFY LIKE WHICH SPIRITUAL ISSUES?

L Like eeh we talk about prayers, prayers are given minimal time, number two the aspect of the word of God. We have a whole year with sermons that should be preached. There is that program that we follow every Sunday, we have like a dictated maybe verses that would be preached in a particular day. I think eeh maybe the preacher, God can give them a sermon or something to speak about, then being fixed on those verses I think is not the best way to go.

HOW WOULD YOU MAYBE PREFER IT TO BE DONE?

L. Maybe we can give the, just give them the date they are coming to preach, and maybe you can as well give them a topic, and then now let them because that will make some of the preachers reluctant so that they will go and pray, seek God and get the verses. That one will also reduce the aspect of being reluctant because by having the verses, and you have the theme, you just come and talk about it briefly, and the church may end up not benefiting so much as it would if the preacher was much prepared.

YOU SAID EARLIER THAT THE CHURCH YOU GO DOES NOT FULFIL YOUR PURPOSE VERY WELL, HOW THEN DO YOU HANDLE THAT, WHAT DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL.

L. I feel we can still change that, I feel, personally I feel I need some backup. Spiritual backup from somewhere else. That's where you realize now you find one attending meetings outside the church, maybe prayer rallies, outside the set program of the church, and then the church..mmm...I think that's it.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUR DESIRES ARE MET?

We have tried in our church by creating more time maybe for prayers. We have also been having meetings there sometimes back. That is having meetings outside the church program like youth keshas, and so on, revivals, and that brought some change from the normal program. Yea, but I still believe the church can still change so that they can be able to accommodate the spiritual aspect of the individuals especially the young people.

SO WHEN YOUHAVE THESE PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE NORMAL, THE LECTIONARY ACTUALLY, WHO ARE THESE DOING IT AND WHAT EFFECT DO THOSE PROGRAMS HAVE IN THE CHURCH

L. About these programs it varies from one church to another but for me we were organising it with some of my brothers from the same church and we used to invite some other preachers from outside who we happened to meet from maybe in high school, preaching and we thought they have some spiritual substance and they would help us and the youth grow. But when we come there at first you are given a chance but with time those things started dying. Its like some people were not really for the same. And maybe the welcome was not that good because you

find that only the young people are attending such meetings. The old our parents tend to ignore such.

QN.2. CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE MOVING FROM METHODIST TO PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES. HOW IS THE MOVEMENT, WHO MOVES AND WHAT COULD BE THE REASON FOR THE MOVEMENT

L. I think I have observed this, it is happening, very rampantly, and I would say that it really affects the church. Methodist church whereby we have most of the young people leaving to other Pentecostal churches. And I think eeh, maybe I can highlight some of the things I think caused that. For one, as I mentioned earlier, flexibility in our church is an issue. So you find most of the young people are growing and they go to learning institutions they find new things which the church is not ready to absolve. So they end up going to another church whereby those things they see in their schools are found. And then secondly, if it applies to everyone because this applied to me if you stay in your own church then you go to school you realise there is a difference because the people in schools, their spiritual levels are very high. If you are brought up in the church and you fear God you don't want to join the other bad group, you end up joining this one and now if you join the other group and you find that you are at a lower level, that is where you are and others are somewhere up there. And now you find most of the young people from Methodist and these other churches, they tend to go to that church. Or if they will not go to a Pentecostal church they will go to the bad company now. So we end up losing we people...we either have them in church to doing nothing participating in none of the church activities of we have them leave and go to somewhere else they can grow and match to their peers. Yea I think that is some of the, those are some the things affecting them because you go to some schools and find there are people praying for over two hours, one hour and you feel like I might be very far from the reality. So that's what makes people to I think that is what makes people to leave and that one actually affects the church in a very big way. We are left with the aged, they are left there, the potential young people leave the church. And that is now killing the future of the church because the church is not able to maintain the young people and show them the right way. I think losing them is losing the future.

DO YOU THINK THIS AFFECTS THE PENTECOST CHURCH IN ANY WAY?

L. mmmmm.. it affects them of course positively because they want to...the energy that was taken from that Methodist church or that catholic church, that energy is transferred to them, so they feel better. And I think that is what they are after, the Pentecostal churches are after actually emptying these, they call religious churches, in quotes religious churches. So they tend of like feel like these peoples are not doing the right thing. So they, having people migrate from Methodist to Pentecost churches make these people feel some kind of pride. At

the end of the day you find that they don't also end up delivering so well. Because they have the freedom, they are not seeing any competition.

NOW YOU HAVE SAID THAT WHEN YOU GO TO HIGH SCHOOL YOU FIND THE RELIGIOUS STANDARDS ARE HIGH. IS IT PENTECOSTAL KIND OF SIRITUALITY OR DO THEY HAVE PROGRAMS LIKE THERE ARE IN MAINLINE CHURCHES, OR WHAT MAKES THESE STANDARDS HIGH MAYBE COMPARED TO OUR CHURCH?

L. I think what makes it high in school is the influence of the..you realise the people coming Pentecostal churches are very impactful. They are very much on that, **they are on prayers, they are on fasting in comparison to the others**, so they are, their voices are higher. they have more impact in those schools so you realise that the school looks like a Pentecostal church while as even if we have more of other people from other churches, they tend to have, **they are more vibrant**, they are more vibrant. The Pentecostal preachers also who are invited to preach in high schools impact very strongly on the young people.

QN. 3 WOULD SHARE WITH ME YOUR OWN EXPERINCE OF GOING TO BOTH PENTECOST AND METHODOST CHURCH. (How frequent or when do you go to other churches, is it only one other church or do you go to several, maybe why)

L. first of all I was brought up at Methodist church, after high school, when I was in college, that is after so many years, I went to another church, a Pentecostal church for around a year, then I went back to Methodist. Now I think the experience is quite different, you cannot compare, it looks like two different things. In terms of **worship**, in terms of **prayer**, in terms of the **word**, everything is different and also in terms of management. They are two different things, now if I were to speak about maybe the program of the church the Sunday service, which is the main service for both churches. I think in Methodist church, we have as I mentioned in the first question, we have so many programs such that I feel **we don't give God all the time, as we ought to**. We have so many things sometimes **selling things in church**, taking over two hours, we **have discussing issues**, people taking a lot of time. And you realise now at the end of the day everybody want to go home but the time we are **giving the word of God is about 15 to 20 minutes**. So I think the **Methodist church giving more time to the things that we have at hand, rather than focusing actually on God, worshiping, praying in that service, makes it quite hard for some people**. On the other hand, the Pentecostal you realise they come early, in comparison to Methodist they come early and they give adequate time to God. **They start at the right time and then the program is more of spiritual things like praise and worship**, up to a particular time then **we have maybe several hours of prayers, intense prayers** and then we have mostly where I attended **around one hour of the word of God**. You realise that at that time people will go home with a different taste of the things they handle at home and the church. That difference, but on the other side you see now we are have you are coming to buy

in church, you bought yesterday from the market, so in the sense of the difference is not there. But when people go and release themselves to God for hours they tend to be relieved from their normal duties. So I think that eeh this is one of the experiences. Another thing when we talk about **management, especially** if I may mention slightly about **finances**, that is now one of the strength of Methodist church. One of the challenges of Pentecostal churches is **the management is done by individuals or maybe two or three people**, but in **Methodist that one is done openly**. So there is a lot of **transparency in comparison to Pentecostals**. All the givings that you give in a Pentecostal church, you are not sure of what they are going to do. But in Methodist they will be read, we collected this amount, this is what was done so that is good that is one of the strength points. And another strength that they have is they are very **I can call it accommodative**, yea you realise they **follow up their members**, rev going places getting people, and they know their people, they follow them up. Yea and on the other side they do the same but not as much. I think that is what I think about the experience of both churches.

PENTECOST SEEM TO BE TAKING PEOPLE AND THEIR FOLLOWUP IS NOT AS GOOD AS METHODIST. WHAT KEEPS THEIR MEMBERS THERE.

L. I think one the, of course **that spiritual fulfilment**, then there is also, they may not gather and come to look for you but the **pastor maybe the pastor will always look for people, will always call you**. But you see **Methodist will go door to door** look for people, pray with you talk to you. In your all functions, they will come out very well so I think that is what I think about that. Meanwhile we have different, you know when we talk about Pentecost churches they are diverse. They are very many also, they are not the same as well.

NOW YOU TALKED ALSO OF SELLING THINGS IN CHURCH THEY SELL MAYBE TO GET MONEY FOR WHATEVER REASON THEY HAVE IN CHURCH. WHAT HAPPENS IN PENTECOST, THEY DON'T SELL. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT THEIR GIVING COMPARED TO THE METHODIST.

L. I think they give more they don't advocate for selling unless on specific days. Because you cant sell every and buy every day and it is in church. If there is selling is done maybe once in a while. They advocate for more of financial giving whereby you go and sell yourself, come with the money.

IS THEIR GIVING BETTER THAN THE METHODIST GIVING?

L. mmmm (laughs) I can say yes, because they give, they they really talk about it and people get to know the benefits of giving maybe paying of tithes. But you find most people in Methodist even though some pay tithe that knowledge is not really established in them. **But in Pentecost people have been taught**. If you pay tithe, this is what will happen, spiritual backup of the word from the bible. That will

now take the preachings. So you see now the pastor will handle the topic of tithing for around a month. So people will be tithing at ease with a knowledge. That's why their giving goes up, because they teach about it.

YOU SAID FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IS BETTER AND THERE IS A LOT OF OPPENNESS WHERE PEOPLE KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE MONEY, BUT IN THE PENTECOST, THEY WILL NEVER KNOW. IT'S THE PASTOR WHO TAKES AND THAT IS THE END. YET THEY GIVE MORE. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE REASON FOR THAT?

L. ..(laughs) That is caused by the, again the **teachings**, the teachings participate, they are, they teach so much on that. They don't, the way they have been taught is like when you are giving to a pastor, its like you are not giving to him actually, you are giving to God. That is the mentality, so nobody bothers really where he takes the money. Its my part I have given the money to God so whether the pastor eats it or he does what he wants with it, its God.

YOU HAVE SAID THAT YOU HAVE ATTENDED PENTECOST FOR ONE YEAR AND THEN YOU CAME BACK TO METHODIST. MAYBE WHAT CAUSED THESE MOVEMENTS. (what makes you attend another church),

L. I went for one year **because I felt like we are not, I am not really exploiting what is in me.** That is the **chances of serving God where I was were very minimal** and I really wanted to do that. I really **wanted to help young people**, talk to them, have morning devotions and I realised in my own church, **some of the leaders were against that.** They became a big issue, that is why I went. And my coming back now was contributed to the by the fact that I have grown there and leaving after growing and this is where I was taught Sunday school, talk things of God and even though I have grown spiritually and I know many things, I felt that it was not right to change the church. I thought it is better after consultation with...I decided to go back.

HOW IS YOUR SPIRITUAL GRWOTH AND PURPOSE BEING TAKEN CARE OF AFTER YOU HAVE COME BACK?

L. Now I am feeling like **I am now a grown up I can manage my own spiritual growth, I can nature, or listen to others, maybe on YouTube,** I can still grow spiritually even if the church is not giving so much. **I can get some other teachings that are building me,** the right content for me, pray also. **I can pray by myself** even in my house so I feel at this time what is expected is more of myself than of others. I have decided to stay in the church but knowing that it is not giving me everything I needed as a Christian.

AT THE MOMENT CAN YOU MOVE TO ANOTHER CHURCH, OR WHAT CAN HOLD YOU FROM MOVING. ARE THERE ANY GOOD THINGS YOU CAN IDENTIFY THAT CAN KEEP YOU FROM MOVING.

L. haha (laughs) waoh..Because it is home. Mmm..i think the transparency is a good thing to go for, the unity, working together, not many things as it stands now. If it was about spirituality actually, I would not give any reason. I may not go and leave the church again, I will never do that but I will **continue attending maybe where I hear there is a conference, yea attending those things** but still in the church. I realised leaving is actually not the best thing to do; you can always balance as you **wait for change**.

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE WITH THAT KIND OF CHRISTIAN LIFE NOT GETTING WHAT YOU WANT AND GETTING IT ELSEWHERE?

L. No, if I can get it in my own church, I would be there every morning and every time. It would be the best thing. But now since it is not available, its just eeh..yea

HOW DOES IT FEEL FOR YOU TO GO TO BOTH CHURCHES, ARE YOU COMFORTABLE, IS IT A GOOD PRACTICE, WOULD YOU RECOMMEND OR DISCOURAGE,

L. I cant say it's a good practice but you are forced to. Actually, you don't go to any church because it's a Pentecostal church. Maybe **after identifying there is something that you need that is found there**. You don't just go and enter into a church saying it's a Pentecostal church but you realize the same Pentecostal churches are hiding so many other things. So I think its not the best thing actually to attend both, but at times you are forced because of the interest.

I cannot really give an answer whether I would encourage or discourage because it will depend from one person to another, but if you get everything you want in the church discourage movement. If you feel you're not getting everything you want as a Christian according to the word of God maybe you **can always seek help somewhere else**. But I cant say that I encourage nor discourage

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEEK SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE IN OTHER CHURCHES OR WOULD YOU LIKE THEM TO HAPPEN IN YOUR OWN?

L. I would like them to happen in my own church that we can be able to help the young people there because you find those who are not able maybe to go elsewhere maybe because of how much their parents are strict, you find at the end of the day you find them in a, you find them spiritually down and they join the life of the other normal people in the society, non believers,. We end up having young **girls in our churches getting pregnant, young boys joining drug and substance abuse and it is because they have an empty space spiritually**. I think I would like them happening in my own church because those people will not get lost, they will not go to the world. They will grow there in the church.

NOW AT THIS POINT WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR CHURCH LEADERS TO KNOW OUT OF ALL THIS.

L. The church leaders need to know their weaknesses, that is making people to move because as I said **the movement is very rampant, its very high, its actually attracting attention**. And if the leaders can be able to change that it will be better. Because you realise **most of these young people they still love their home church, they still love their foundational church. But they don't get what they want**, so I think if the leaders will be aware of this and meet and decide on how they can reduce this movement, they will be better. And also understand the, their strength point and better them so that they can be able to achieve more. Consider helping young people spiritually, because they thought that they will get lost to the world. So they should know that people are really thirsty of a spiritual fulfilment. And people are thirsty maybe of part of the holy spirit, that is maybe the Methodist leaders, the Anglican leaders, they should know that and find on a way they can fulfil their people because they have the numbers, but maintaining those numbers is key. They have the numbers, especially the young generation. Because **if we continue the way it is now we will be having the old churches, mother churches sucked out by Pentecostals**. We will be having old people in these churches and if our leaders can handle that they will have handled, they will have helped the future.

DO YOU THINK THE METHODIST CHURCH FOR EXAMPLE HAS THE ABILITY TO MEET THOSE SPIRITUAL NEEDS YOU ARE IDENTIFYING?

L. **Methodist church has more ability than the Pentecostal church to meet the spiritual needs of the young people. Because they have the management, they have learned people, people with information, people who are exposed, yea they are at a better position to provide that. The only thing is that they want to retain what was there, they are not ready for change (laughs)**. But if they decide to provide that they give it to their best.

I AM WONDERING WHAT CHANGE THEY CAN ALLOW OR WHAT SHOULD THEY CHANGE

L. I think one, **they need to change on their view, on the aspect of the Holy Spirit**. That has been one of the things that is bringing a lot of difference between them and the Pentecostal churches.

WHAT SPECIFICALLY DO YOU MEAN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHAT IS IT REALLY. COULD YOU SAY A BIT ABOUT THAT.

L. Okay, I think they believe in the holy spirit but partially, eeh I mean **they don't give the full support to the holy spirit** as, for example as the bible records, we have different gifts of the holy spirit. We have different ministries, five-fold ministries. We have also the fruits of the Holy Spirit. So what we find in the Methodist church mostly are the fruits but **many Christians in that church cannot grow to attaining the level of having the gifts of the holy spirit which is a higher spiritual level**. But I think they are able to do that but unwillingness because again of the change. **I tend to feel that eeh maybe they met things that way and**

everybody is just following. But there is, according to the I have been taught and in interaction with the word of God, there is need to give that aspect of the holy spirit a bigger part of the church, such that the church will be having people that can pray, people that are full of wisdom, people that are full of knowledge, so that we don't just have average Christians who are ready to be told, everything they are told they follow. People that can also maybe hear the voice of God and speak, people that can speak in other tongues and pray, people that can interpret the tongues, so you find these giftings are found in the Pentecostals but they are not found in our church because we don't give room. So that is what I think about the Holy Spirit.

ANYTHING ELSE THEY NEED TO CHANGE.

L. mmm.. Probably, another thing that they need to change that I have realized personally is modernization of the church to fit the young people. There is a nice technic but it may not work for long because, we cannot accommodate everything in the church that is, that the young people want. So the church should be in a position to give directives. Maybe the code of dressing, the accepted code of behaviour, as a Christian, these things are not found in our church. You just can go sin and come back, you can dress the way you want in church and nobody will ask you anything. And I think maybe its is good to maintain them but it may not maintain them for so long. I think we can also change on the time we have, apart from the normal service. We still need more time with God. They do that but very in a very lazy way. We are coming for maybe we have fasting maybe on a Wednesday, we have one in our church, but you find five people out of seventy. So I think this should be given more emphasis.

HOW CAN THAT ONE BE DONE BECAUSE IF IT IS THERE AND YOU HAVE FIVE PEOPLE, HOW CAN IT BE MADE TO HAVE MORE PEOPLE AND HAVE MORE IMPACT?

L. I think the teachings again, our teachings. We utilize the Sunday service because if you teach them well on Sunday, on prayer and fasting, tell them to fast with that information, and knowledge, on the importance of praying and fasting, they will turn up. But if you have a ten minute sermon and then tell them to come on Wednesday for fasting, they will not see the essence.

NOW THE NEXT ONE IS HAVE YOU EVER ATTENDED AN URBAN METHODIST OR PENTECOST CHURCH?

L. I have been at Kariakor in Nairobi. That is now where the unmonitored modernization I saw that. They try to accommodate the young people of the town but they bring all their things in the alter, their dressing, their dancing styles, which are used in the club at night they come with them in the church. I think it should be there and accepted as something modern but should also be monitored, so that we cannot cross the boundaries.

I have attended an urban Pentecost church at Nakuru. I loved their organization, maybe because they are under somebody sober. Kingdom Seekers Fellowship, you realize the man of God there is sober, so everything there is good. Everything is balanced so well but urban Pentecostal I don't really trust them so much. So I may not go entering any I am very selective

(WHY)?

Because you realize they talk about the Holy Spirit, the diversities of the move of God and everything, but some have made their own methodologies, their own inventories, and they call them Holy Spirit still. So there is the exaggerated part of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecostal churches that we need also to be aware of. And that's why I said Methodist is at a better position because they can balance things. Its in a better position to provide that spiritual guidance to people. Yea so I think there are very many people who have started churches not because they really have the call of God but because maybe of their financial struggles, maybe they are not educated and they want to get some money in terms of offering from the people. we have fake fake fake, very fake people performing miracles which are not there, although miracles are there and they are performed, people are prayed for and they get well, you realize there are people faking that. So that one also is another issue that's why I don't go just entering in those churches.

IS THIS ALSO FOUND IN THE RURAL PENTECOSTALS?

L. Mostly urban and somehow scarcely in the rural areas.

ANYTHING ELSE IN THE URBAN METHODIST?

L. I didn't stay there for long but their services are better than the rural ones, because they don't have those things for selling, they don't have many people talking, maybe one person will talk. They worship for quality time; I think their Sunday service program is better than our Sunday service program here.

So the movement may not be as big because even I go there I will attend that church. I feel comfortable. With the negative part of the urban Pentecostal churches gives the Methodist in urban areas an upper hand because if you go from the rural area, you go to town you don't know where to go you cannot go any church. So most people prefer going to a church they that they know.

ANYTHING ELSE STILL?

L. Maybe to the Methodist because I have been there longer, as I said their management is good but the aspect of choosing leaders looks like but I will not say this is from me, you hear people saying I am just trying to highlight, that Methodist is for the rich people. You find that when we are almost doing an election, or we want to give some responsibilities in the church, we first of all consider not those who are spiritually mature or grownup but the ones that can support us financially in the church. That is another thing that can be looked at in

Methodist. Because you realize some people even if they have bad reputation in the village they will still be given a chance in the church just because they are financially stable. That one does not involve the clergy; it involves mostly the church, within the local church.

WHAT DO YOU THINK CAUSES THIS?

L. I am not sure, I think maybe fear, that fear kind of respect. You want them to feel appreciated.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE INTERVIEW AND YOUR TIME.

END